NATIONALIST HISTORIANS ON SIKH HISTORY

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DECLARATION

I Harsimranjeet Kaur hereby affirm that the work in this thesis is exclusively my own and there are no collaborations. It does not contain any work for which a Degree/Diploma has been awarded by any University/Institution.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis *"Nationalist Historians on Sikh History"* embodies the work carried out by Harsimranjeet Kaur herself under my supervision and that it is worthy of consideration for the award of Ph.D. Degree.

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Abstracts

Nationalist Historiography means that the historical writings produced or reproduced by the Indian historians highlight the Indian history from a national point of view. The national point of view represents the national culture and tradition. Every nation has its own culture and traditions and every nation wants to spread it. It can only be possible thought the literature. History is a part and parcel of literature, therefore, what history is written by a nation that represents its culture and traditions. That is called the nationalist historiography.

The early decades to the twentieth century were dominated by an upsurge of religious nationalism. In Punjab Gokul Chand Narang was powerfully influenced by this nationalism of the period. He was the first historian of Sikh history who wrote a regular history of the Sikhs in 1912 under the title of *Transformation of Sikhism*. The second historian was principal Sita Ram Kohli who wrote history of Maharaja Ranjit Singh from the national point of view. Similarly, the historians like Indubhusan Banerjee, N.K. Sinha and A.C. Banerjee also wrote Sikh history from the national view point. These historians interpret Sikh history as the freedom movement for India. According to these historians, Sikh movement

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brought renaissance among the Indians and as a result of this renaissance they waged a war against the Mughal rule. The Sikhs were the first people who uprooted the Mughal Empire in the Punjab and established their rule. This was the national upsurge. These historians applauded the Sikh achievements in the field of politics. The thesis is centred on this point only. As a result of the efforts of all these nationalist historians, the Sikh history achieved an honourable place in Indian history. The achievements of the Sikh movement were regarded as the best Sikh contribution to the Indian nation. The Sikhs were regarded as warrior community of India and the Punjab is regarded as the sword arm of India.

The Key Words in the Thesis

National Historians, Historiography, Revolutionary, Reformer, National movement, Sikhism, Creation of the Khalsa, National view point, Sectarian view point, Misl, Gurmata, Punjab Kingdom etc.

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INTRODUCTION

Historical facts are uniformally similar for everyone but their interpretation varies. Very few historians' interpretation agrees with each other's. Every historian has his own point of view. It keeps on changing with the passage of time. In fact, the past is interpreted in the light of the present and it is a continuing process. This is particularly correct about the Sikh history. There is not so much diversity of opinion in the interpretation of any other nation's history as it is in the case of Sikh history. Each of the historians who has written on Sikh history has his own distinct point of view. The main reason for this diversity of opinion about Sikh history is because of Sikh religion's origin in the form of a revolution and its progress as a counterforce to the contemporary established order. The established order consisted of the political entity in power, clerics of Islam, Muslim clergy, Brahminical order and its offshoots such as the *yogis* and the *Naths*. The Indian society was a hybrid product of all these influences. Sikh religion's achievements were incredible, so incredible indeed that they attracted the attention of almost every intellectual of the world. That is why every school of thought has commented upon Sikh religion and history. This also explains the diversity of opinion in the interpretation of Sikh history. Till date, interpretation of Sikh history has not attained a state of finality.

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Different schools of historians have failed to arrive at a consensus in their interpretation of Sikh history. Since the main concern in this thesis is the nationalist interpretation of Sikh history, I shall be elaborating this point of view primarily.

Sikh religion came into existence due to the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev. Since the milieu in which Guru Nanak preached belonged predominantly to the Hindus and the Muslims, we find majority of references in his teachings refering to these two communities. While Muslims belonged to the ruling class, the Hindus were politically the subjects of that ruling class. Despite this, the Hindus were in a majority and their religion and society were centuries older than the Islamic society. As a result, the Hindu society had more weaknesses, though Muslim society too had its fair share of shortcomings. These shortcomings were inherent in religious, social and political spheres of society. Of these, the social sphere suffered from the maximum inadequacies. It is because of this reason that there are comparatively more references to the social drawbacks in the Hindu society in the teachings of Guru Nanak.

Guru Nanak's message and teachings are present in his divine verses. These divine verses are included in *Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. His message is universal rather than being directed towards any one community. An analysis of the entire body of his

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divine verses and their cumulative message will reveal that Guru Nanak is critical of Brahmins (priestly class) as well as kshtriyas (warrior class). But he also emphasizes that even Brahmins and kshtriyas can be worthy of emulation if they inculcate and adopt good human values and virtues[1]. Likewise, Guru Nanak has criticised as well as appreciated the Hindu scriptures. These have been appreciated because they contain profound human values. But they have been criticised because of their faulty exposition and application of those virtues[2]. Hindu rituals have been denounced but even these can be accepted if the spirit behind these rituals is properly understood and cultivated. But Brahminism has made these rituals so complicated that these have become too cumbersome to be practised. Hence these have become absurd and meaningless. Existence of Hindu gods and goddesses have been recognised but their Brahminical conception has been found fault with. Guru Nanak simply wanted to show that they were not superior to God, but were his creation. Mohsin Fani writes, "Nanak praised Musalmans as well as the *Avatars*

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1 "He alone is a Brahman, who knows the Transcendent Lord. Who performs the deeds of devotion, austerity and self-restrain. Who observes the faith of humility and contentment and breaking his bonds, is emancipated. Such a Brahman alone is worthy of being worshipped." *Guru Granth Sahib, Salok Varaan Te Vadhik*, p. 1411.
"He alone is Khatri, who is brave in good deeds. Who yokes his body in charity and alms-giving and who ascertaining the farm to be right, sows the seed of beneficence." *bid.*, p,1411.

2 See also Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs: The Sikh Gurus* 1469-1708, Vol. I, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 83-84. And Indubhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of The Khalsa*, vol. I, Calcutta,1979, p.140.

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and gods and goddesses of the Hindus; but he held that all these had been created and were not creators, and he denied their incarnation."[3] Above all, unlike the Islamic clerics who branded the Hindus as *kafirs* (infidels) and unlike the Brahmins who declared the Muslims as *Malechas* (barbarian/uncivilised), Guru Nanak respected both the communities and regarded them as equally honourable sections of humanity. For the dissemination of his teachings and ideas, Guru Nanak undertook long tours both in and outside India,visited prominent centers of Hunduism and Islam and had detailed discussions with the so-called leaders of the various religions and social orders.

What deserves to be particularly noticed about this whole process of Guru Nanak's preaching of his message is that whatever he preached, he did it in a perfectly planned manner. It means whatever Guru Nanak communicated to his followers, it was conveyed in a completely transparent and clear words. He adopted the vernacular Punjabi, the native idiom as the medium of his instruction. This facilitated a direct communication between Guru Nanak and his followers. He told them in their native language that there was only One God and the entire humanity was His creation. Since the whole creation has the same fatherhood of God, all human beings belong to the same

3 As quoted by Ganda Singh, in *The Punjab Past And Present*, Punjabi University, Patiala, April 1967, p.51.

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brotherhood of man. As there can not be any division among human beings on the basis of castes, all human beings are equal. As the Divine Lord is without any visible manifestation, He has no form. He is formless. All the so-called gods and goddesses are under His Command. Therefore, Guru Nanak emphasized that his followers should not believe in any other gods or goddesses other than the one monotheistic God. Similarly, all rituals and ceremonies are meaningless and irrelevant. Every human being must earn his living honestly. He must also share a part of his earings with others. After satisfying his basic needs, he should meditate upon the scared name of the Divine. In this way, Guru Nanak determined the place of religion in social context. His aim was to create a homogeneous society free from class conflict. Therefore, his religion was a people's movement based on modern conception of secularism and socialism a common brotherhood of all human beings. His faith was simple and sublime. This, in nutshell, is the essence of Guru Nanak's message of teachings.

The second aspect of Guru Nanak's plan was his adoption of the native language as the medium of his instruction. Therefore, Guru Nanak composed all his divine verses in Punjabi. His collection of the divine verses of other saints (*Bhaktas*) and Muslim mystics (*sufis*) was also preserved after translating these into Punjabi. He adopted the Gurmukhi script for his

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compositions. Moreover, Guru Nanak organized his followers in the form of sangats. So sangat was the primary form of organization of his followers.[4] Since Guru Nanak's followers listened to his sermons and lived their lives according to the message of his teachings, they came to be known as 'Sikhs' in the Indian society. Gradually, Guru Nanak's teachings took the form of Sikh religion (Sikhism) and his followers constitutes a Sikh community.

The most important stage in the planned mission of Guru Nanak arrived when he appointed Guru Angad Dev as his successor in order to carry on his mission. This step further made the Sikh religion an organized religion with a distinct identity of its own. Guru Angad Dev's unique contribution consisted in developing Gurmukhi letters into a regular script. With the creation of this new and distinct script for writing purposes, the distinction between Sikh society and the Hindu society became more marked and clear. Later on, when Guru Arjan Dev compiled *Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib* in Punjabi language and in the Gurmukhi script, the distinction between the Sikh and the Hindu became more prominent. Now the Sikhs, like all other religions, had their own scripture in the form of *Guru Granth*

4 Fauja Singh's article 'Development of Sikhism under The Gurus' in L. M. Joshi(ed.), *Sikhism*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1969, pp. 5-6.

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Sahib. This addition provided the Sikhs with a distinct identity.[5] After some time, Guru Gobind Singh with the creation of the Khalsa on the Baisakhi day of 1699 with a definite Code of Conduct and way of life, transformed the Sikhs into a distinct order. By adopting a Sikh identity consisting of unshorn hair and five Sikh symbols (Kakaars) after getting initiated by dispensing with the belief the caste system and by reposing their complete faith in Guru Granth instead of in other gods and goddesses by the express commandment of the tenth Guru, the Sikhs had organised themselves into a completely new religion and a new society. The Khasla way of life had created a consciousness among the Sikhs of their having a distinctly new faith and a new identity.

These were the broad contours around which the Sikh religion and Sikh society had originated and developed during a long span of two hundred and thirty nine years (1469-1708). These developments had provided a distinctly new religion and social identity to Sikhism and differentiated it from Hinduism although this distinct identity of Sikhism was not as marked as that of Islam or Christianity. Despite the religious and social distinction between Hinduism and Sikhism, the Hindus and the Sikhs had common food sharing and marital relationships.

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5 See also A. C. Banerjee, *Guru Nanak And His Times*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2000, pp. 180-81.

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What is, howoever, noteworthy is that despite Guru Nanak's opposition of Brahminism, Brahminical society, customs and traditions and Brahminical concept of gods and goddess, the Hindu society had been holding Guru Nanak in as much veneration as it did its own religious peers. The formost reason for this Hindu veneration of Guru Nanak was that Guru Nanak, while denouncing Brahminism, had never denigrated the Hindu society as such. Brahminism had really become hollow because of its excessive baggage of senseless and useless rituals. Even though the Hindu society was also aware of its hollowness, yet it had no social reformer at that moment who could lead a crusade against Brahminism. The other reason for Hindu veneration of Guru Nanak was Guru Nanak's sermonising against the Mughal rule. Guru Nanak was singularly the only preacher among the Indian saints (*Bhaktas*) who had denounced Babur's invasion of India in unequivocal terms. Guru Nanak's composition 'Babarvani'[6] is the only contemporary written record which had forcefully denounced the Babur's invasions on India. There is no other written treatise in India among the contemporary compositions which denounces Babur's invasions. It was the denunciation of foreign invaders which had made Guru Nanak the most universally accepted hero of the entire Indian society.

6 *Guru Granth Sahib,* pp. 360, 417-18 and 722-23.

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Without objecting to Guru Nanak's anti-Brahminical preaching, the Hindu society visualised Guru Nanak as a national hero who had the guts to challenge the foreign invaders. Here to quote Gokul Chand Narang in his own words, is pertinent. Teachings of Guru Nanak "Leavened the whole Hindu thought in the Punjab and improved the moral and spiritual tone of the whole people. Here was, now, for the first time after ages of dissension and discord, a hero whom every Hindu called his own, and of whom every Hindu could ful justly proud. The appearance of Nanak was a great step towards arousing consciousness of a common nationalist. Since Hindu Kings had fallen, Nanak was the first Hindu hero who command the allegiance of all parties, because he did not identify himself with any party. Though he attacked all parties, tore their cherished beliefs into shreds, he became the popular hero because it was soon found that he was destroying only that which was not genuine but a mere addition or an assertion to their religion."[7]

As a result of this stance, there was a steady increase in Guru Nanak's followers which included the Hindus as well. By the time of Guru Arjan Dev's Gurushiip, this following had increased so much that the Muslim fundamentalists had started regarding it as a potential threat to Islam. This fundamentalist

7 Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, New Delhi, 1998, p. 26.

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section among the Muslims, under the influence of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi, instigated the newly-crowned Mughal emperor Jahangir against Guru Arjan Dev so much that he got the fifth Sikh Guru arrested and executed on the pretext of his (Guru's) having provided protection to the rebel prince Khusro. This execution of Guru Arjun Dev had pitted the Sikhs against the Mughal rule. The Sikhs, under the command of Guru Hargobind, had picked up swords and jumped into the field of battle against the Mughals. Although these initial skirmishes were against the local-level Muslim officials, but these very officials were the pillars of the Mughal empire. This was the first occasion when armed fight took place between the Sikhs and the Mughal rulers. Irrespective of the results of these local level armed fights, these skirmishes had definitely increased the feelings of enmity between the Sikhs and the Mughal empire and an "important result that flowed from the infusion of martial spirit into the community under the leadership of Guru Hargobind was hat the Sikh movement hence forward, assumed a positively national character."[8]

During the period of Guruship of Guru Har Rai and Guru Harkrishan, the Mughal emperor's interference in the religious affairs of the Sikhs had increased so much that the Sikhs started feeling that the Mughal rulers were bent upon suppressing the

8 Fauja Singh's article *Development of Sikhism under the Gurus,* in L.M. Joshi (ed.), *Sikhism*, p. 20.

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Sikhs. Guru Tegh Bahadur's travels across the several Indian provinces had once again catapulted the ninth Sikh Guru as Indian society's hero much in the manner of Guru Nanak's social elevation. Later on, Guru Tegh Bahadur's travels across the Malwa region of Punjab had won him the allegiance of the Malwa jats as it happened earlier during Guru Arjan Dev's time. The whole Hindu society of India looked upon Guru Tegh Bahadur for leadership. In the words of Gokul Chand Narang "He was known throughout upper India, was highly revered by Rajput princes, and was actually worshipped by the peasantry of the Punjab and was generally looked upon as a champion of the Hindus."[9] All the Brahmins of India were rallying round Anandpur Sahib. It all went against the Mughal rule. It resulted in the same consequences as it had happened at the time of Guru Arjan Dev. The jat community of Punjab had an independent entity in itself. It had become the focus of attention of Islamic clergy. It had converted a large section among the Jats into Islam. It was Guru Arjan Dev who had stopped this spate of religious conversions into Islam. As a result, majority of the Jat tribes had come into the fold of Sikh religion. Muslim rulers and clergy had taken this

9 Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, Kalyani New Delhi,1998, p. 70. See also Fauja Singh, *Guru Tegh Bahadur: Martyr And Teacher*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1975, pp. 90-91.

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development as a danger signal for Islam. This had led to the arrest and execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675.[10]

A government is meant to protect its people. But what could be said about a government which was inclined towards suppressing its people? A foreign power alone could behave in such an autocratic manner. At least, a native government never persecutes its religious leaders to whatever faith they may belong. But the Mughal kingship, despite its governing India for a long span of one hundred and forty nine years (1526-1675), could not convince the Indian people and Indian society that it was their own government. For the Indian people, particularly for the Sikhs, the Mughal rule remained a foreign power. After the martyrdom of its two Gurus, it was inevitable for the Sikhs to regard the Mughal rule as an alien or a foreign power. These acts of martyrdom also had a bearing on the creation of the Khalsa later on in 1699. It certainly needed efforts on a large scale to combat such a tyrannical foreign power. It called for the constitution of an organization which followed a strict Code of Conduct and which, believing in divine grace, was motivated to wage a war against an oppressive regime.

Khalsa Panth was created on the Baisakhi day of 1699 to fulfill this mission. Undoubtedly, a greater sense of discipline had

10 Fauja Singh, *Ibid.*, See also *Malwa Desh Rattan Di Sakh Pothi*, published by Khalsa Samachar, Amritsar, 1968, pp. 77-89.

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percolated among the Sikhs with the creation of the Khalsa, though it had also created a feeling of unrest to a great extent among the Brahmins and the Kshtryas. But without inculcating such a sense of strict regimen, Sikh revolution would not have succeeded in its mission. Although Guru Nanak's mission in itself was a revolutionary development, but with the creation of the Khalsa another revolution within a revolution had taken place. Authorities are always opposed to revolutions because they inflict their very first blow on the political authority in power. The revolutionary organization of the Khalsa, with the setting of the headquarters of its republic at Anandpur Sahib, had inflicted a body blow to the contemporary provincial authorities of Bilaspur (Kahloor). It planned to carry on a bigger onslaught on the Mughal rule from this launching pad.

It is for these reasons that the contemporary authorities had started launching attacks on Anandpur Sahib soon after the Creation of the Khalsa. First of all, the ruler of Bilaspur had attacked Anandpur which was repulsed. Thereafter, several hill chiefs together attacked Anandpur Sahib, but so formidable had the Khalsa become that it repulsed the combined forces of hill chiefs as well. Finally, the forces from the Mughal empire had arrived to support the forces of the hill chiefs. Clearly, the newly established strength of the Khalsa was no match for the combined

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military power of the Mughals and the hill chiefs. As a result, the Khalsa had to vacate Anandpur Sahib and Guru Gobind Singh had to bear a great loss of life of his sons and mother as well as property. But despite this colossal loss of life and property, Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa continued their struggle. It resulted in the quick reorganization of the Khalsa which led to another encounter with the Mughal forces at the wetlands of Khidrana (Muktsar) and the consequent defeat of the Mughal forces. Loss of this battle was a great challenge to the Mughal empire.

It needs to be observed that although the hill states were the Hindu states and their rulers claimed themselves as protectors of the Hindu religion but, in reality, they did not represent the Hindu society. They were the vassals of the Mughal empire. They ruled under the writ of the Mughal emperor. They had launched attacks on Guru Gobind Singh at the dictates of the Mughal emperor rather than on the instructions of Hindu community. That is why, despite the repeated attacks by the hill chiefs on Anandpur Sahib, these battles had never taken the form of Hindu-Sikh wars. On the contrary, the Hindus continued to remain a devout follower of the House of the Sikh Gurus. As the Hindu community did not stand by the hill chiefs, the Mughal forces from the provinces of Sirhind, Jammu and Lahore arrived to support the hill chiefs.

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Although, Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperor, was occupied in the Southern part of India at that time, but his attention was focussed on Punjab. He was being kept posted continuously with the latest developments in Punjab. He apprehended that the Khalsa revolution in Punjab might not spread further and engulf the whole of India. He feared that it would be well-nigh impossible to save the Mughal empire if the whole of India rallied round Guru Gobind Singh. Apprehending all these possibilities, he had invited Guru Gobind Singh for negotiations. It becomes clear from the written contents of Zafarnama[11] that Guru Gobind Singh had received these messages in writing from Aurangzeb. The Guru had written to Aurangzeb in response to the emperor's written promises that they lacked credibility because the Mughal emperor as well as his officials had been guilty of backtracking on their promises. So the Guru would never trust any sort of promises on the part of the emperor. If at all the Mughal emperor wished to meet the Guru, he could come to Punjab and meet him at any place of his choice. The veracity of these assertions can be confirmed from the poetic couplets of the Guru's "Zafarnama" (Epistle of Victory).

After the victory over the Mughal forces of Sarhind at Khidrana (Muktsar), Guru Gobind Singh travelled across Punjab

11 *Zafarnama*: the epistle of victory written by Guru Gobind Singh to Aurangzeb in 1606. It has been published by various agencies in an independent form.

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and other regions of India in a completely defiant mood while preaching his mission of the Khalsa. While Guru Gobind Singh was moving about in Rajasthan, Aurangzeb expired. The next Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah, since his days of governorship, had been a devout follower of the Guru. Therefore, his attitude towards the Guru was completely different from that of his father. He regarded the Guru essentially a religious leader and he continued to seek the Guru's blessings for taking over the reigns of power. But Guru's mission was to enable the Indian-people to be their own rulers. So he kept on stressing upon the Mughal emperor to provide such a system of governance to the Indian people so that they could feel the glow of governing themselves. Whether Bahadur Shah had adopted a policy of procrastination towards these suggestions or he really did not get an opportunity to implement these policies, either of these two policies can be accepted. Unfortunately, during this period Guru Gobind Singh breathed his last after a fatal attempt at his assassination. Before his demise, Guru Gobind Singh had appointed Banda Singh Bahadur as a leader of the Khalsa so that he might carry on with the Khalsa revolution. The Guru had directed Banda Singh Bahadur explicitly that it was not possible to win independence without an armed struggle. Therefore, immediately after arriving in Punjab, Banda Singh Bahadur had started an armed struggle

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and succeeded in establishing a Khalsa republic over a vast tract of land between the rivers of Sutlej and Yamuna after defeating the ruler of Sirhind in May 1710. The Mughal chiefs were terribly crushed in the Punjab province. Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah and his next successor Jahandar Shah were both killed while fighting against Banda Singh Bahadur's revolutionary onslaught. Banda Singh Bahadur had started his crusade from the two villages *Sehar* and *Khanda* situated between Rohtak and Sonepat. After taking over Sonepat, Kaithal and Kunjpura (Karnal) he had advanced towards Samana. Whole of this region was inhabited by a majority of Hindu population. Banda Singh Bahadur had invaded the Mughal citadels with the whole-hearted support of the Hindu population. Sadhaura, Kapal Mochan, Buria, Mukhlisgarh (Lohgarh)—all of these were Hindu majority areas. Banda Singh Bahadur's entire force was centred in this region. It means that the entire Hindu population had supported his struggle. Although the Rajput rulers and hill chiefs were on the side of the Mughals yet these feudal chiefs did not represent the Hindu mainstream. With the annihilation of the Mughal power, the Hindus were also likely to get independence.[12]

12 For the exploits and achievemants of Banda Singh Bahadur see Ganda Singh, *Life of Banda Singh Bahadur*, Khalsa College, Amritsar, 1935. And Sukhdial Singh, *Khalsa Raj Da Bani Banda Singh Bahadur* (Punjabi), Punjabi University, Patiala, 2003.

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Banda Singh Bahadur had, no doubt, ended the Mughal rule in Punjab but his own rule could not last long. Very soon, the Mughal forces became dominant once again. Banda Singh Bahadur was captured and executed. Massacre of the Sikhs accompanied his execution. Hardly any able-bodied Sikh was spared who could take part in a fight. It was such a horrible massacre that the Khalsa could not reorganise itself for the next seventeen/eighteen years. Finally, Nawab Kapoor Singh had reorganised the Khalsa in 1733-34 and a planned armed struggle by the Khalsa against the Mughal rule started in 1748. A National Khalsa army under the command of Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was organised. It was a unique endeavour indeed.[13]

Initially, this armed struggle had been started against the Mughal rule but invaders like Ahmad Shah Abdali replaced the Mughals soon after. After Ahmad Shah Abdali had decimated the Marathas during the third battle of Panipat in 1764, he confronted the Sikhs directly. The Khalsa turned out Ahmed Shah Abdali from Punjab in 1765 and took over the reins of power in Punjab in the form of *Misls*. Thereafter, Maharaja Ranjit Singh established his sovereign rule in 1799 which lasted till 1849. After this, the British annexed the Khalsa empire into the Indian State over which they were ruling.

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13 For the struggle of the Sikhs during eighteenth century see N. K. Sinha, *Rise of The Sikh Power,* Calcutta, 1936 and Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, vol. II, New Delhi, 1978.

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There were more Muslim and Hindu ministers than the Sikhs in the Court and Cabinet of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Hindu historians hold Maharaja Ranjit Singh in greater esteem than do the Sikh historians. The former consider Maharaja Ranjit Singh a symbol of India's sovereignty. Some of them have gone to the extent of describing Maharaja Ranjit Singh as God sent guardian and protector of the Hindus. Gokul Chand Narang writes, "Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the beau ideal of Sikh chivalry. In him the Sikh power was at its zenith. Not only the Sikhs but whole Hindu nation felt that in him the sun of Hindu glory had once more risen in the political horizon of India. They showered upon him their heartiest blessings. They looked upon him as their liberator and protector, one who after centuries of barbarous attacks from the North, hurled back the invaders and raiders to their mountain lairs. They bestowed their unstinted love and affection on him and revered him as a God sent guardian of their hearths and homes and up holder of their national honour."[14]

Thus, the prolonged armed struggle waged by the Khalsa during the eighteenth Century between the years 1708 to 1765 had been primarily against the Mughal empire. The more the Mughal empire weakened, the more the Hindus benefited from its

14 Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism,* p. 177.

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crumbling. During the Khalsa empire, which had been established after dispensing with the Mughal empire, though the Muslims were quite satisfied with it, but the Hindus were so much satisfied that they could hardly distinguish between its Hindu and Sikh officials. Therefore, the Hindus visualised their own freedom in the Khalsa struggle and a glorious future for their religion during the impending Khalsa empire. It was primarily for this reason that the Hindus considered the Khalsa as their own fraternity despite the fact that the Sikhs in the form of the Khalsa were clearly separate from the Hindus. Another reason (for Hindu-Sikh affinity) was that Sikhism was born out of the Indian culture and civilization. This Indian identity of their culture and civilization had kept the Hindus and the Sikhs bonded to each other despite the separation in their religious identities. On the contrary, the Muslim invaders never regarded the Hindu society as their own fraternity despite their stay in India for centuries. The Muslim emperors or Sultans who had tried to consider the Hindu Society as their own fraternity were never considered to be good Muslims from the Islamic point of view. Despite the fact that the Muslims had lived in India since the centuries. they were born in India, married in India and died here too, but they never adopted the Indian culture and civilization. They always regarded the Hindus as '*kafirs*' (Infidels). It was considered a matter of great honour to

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slaughter the infidels. Raising monuments of the heads of the slaughtered infidels (Hindus) was regarded as the highest achievement by the Islamic conquerors. Seen in this context the existence of emotional affinity between the Hindus and the Sikhs was a natural consequence. We are to consider the Hindu-Sikh relationship in this context only. Marital relationship and sharing of food are the highest human bonds between any two communities. Such a bond did exist between the Hindus and the Sikhs. But such a bond did not exist either between the Hindus and the Muslims or between the Sikhs and the Muslims. This is the best Yardstick to measure the depth of emotional affinity between different communities.

Then, during the 1870s, there started the Singh Sabha Movement which was purely cultural in nature. It brought about many reforms in the educational field. After that, there started the Gurdwara Reform Movement in the second decade of twentieth century which brought the historical Gurdwaras under one legally constituted body through legislation. The Gurdwara Reform Movement was followed by a struggle for India's independence in Punjab. The Sikhs were in the vanguard of this struggle. Along with this struggle for independence, the Muslim league had come out with a two-nation theory. As per this theory, India was inhabited by two nations instead of a single nation. The Muslim

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League had put forth a demand that the British could vacate India only after India's division between the two nations. It was a very dangerous preposition. The Sikhs had demanded that India should constitute a single nation. But, if at all, it had to be divided, it should be divided into three parts among the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs. During this political tug-of-war, the Congress party was bent upon winning the allegiance of the Sikhs. Occasionally, the Muslim League had also endeavoured to win the Sikhs' allegiance but its efforts lacked credibility. This was the period when the Hindu historians had begun to write the history of the Sikhs.

The Sikhs, Muslims, Britishers and the Hindus – all of them have written on Sikh history. Since it was but natural for the Sikhs to write about their religion, so the earliest accounts about Sikh history are those written by the Sikhs. These include *vaars* by Bhai Gurdas, the *Janam Sakhis*, Sainapat's *Sri Gursobha*, *Bhatt Vaheeyan* (Ledgers maintained by Bhat Brahmins), *Rehatnamas*, *Gur Bilas*, *Panth Prakash* and several other accounts. Muslim writers have also written on Sikh history. Prominent among these accounts are: *Seer-ul-Mutakhreen* by Munshi Ghulam Hussain (1785-89); *Muntkhab-ul-Lubab* (1935-36) by Khafi Khan; *Ibaratnama* by Mufti-Ali-ud-din, *Tarikh-e-Punjab* (1840s) by Ghulam-Mohu-ud-Din Buteshah *Tarikh-e-Punjab/*

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Zikar-e-Guruan-Va-Ibtida-a-Singhan (1824-25) by Ahmed Shah Batalvi; *History of the Panjab* (1891) by Mohammad Latif; *Fatuhat Nama-i-Samadi* (1722-23) by an anonymous writer; *Asrar-e-Samadi* (1728-29); *Tehmasnama* (1789-90) by Tehmas Khan Miskin and *Jangnama* (1766-67) by Kazi Noor Mohammad and others. Undoubtedly, these are the contemporary accounts of different periods of Sikh history, but they have used a very derogatory language about the Sikhs. They have showered the choicest vocabulary of abuses on the Sikhs; So such accounts can never form the true basis for writing an authentic history.

The Hindu writers have also written on Sikh history. Some of them are earlier writers while others are modern. There is a difference in approach and interpretation of Sikh history in the writings of both the categories. Although the earlier Hindu historians have not used any derogatory language against the Sikhs like their Muslim Counterparts, yet their writings lack the sense of devotion towards the Sikhs as we find in the writings of modern Hindu historians. On the other hand, we find both devotion as well as critical analysis in the writings of modern Hindu historians. Among the early Hindu historians and their works, we include Buddh Singh Arora's *Risala Dar-Ahwal-a-Nanak Shah Darvesh* (1783); Bakhat Mal's *Khalsanama*; Ganesh Dass Wadhera's *Charbagh-a-Punjab*; Khushwaqat Rai's *Twarikh-a-*

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Sikhan-wa Mulk-i-Punjab-wa-Malwa (1840), Shardha Ram Philori's, *Sikhan-De-Raj-Di-Vithia* (1867) and Kanaihia Lal's *Tarikh-a-Punjab*. Among the modern Hindu historians we include Gokul Chand Narang (1912), Sita Ram Kolhi, Indubhushan Banerjee (1935-47), N.K. Sinha and A.C. Banerjee.

There is another category of historians along with these Sikh Muslim and Hindu-historians which has influenced the entire Sikh history through their writings. To this category belong the European historians. Their writings have provided a new technique and new interpretation to the Sikh history. Since these European historians were not thoroughly acquainted with the Punjabi language, culture and tradition, their writings suffer from several inadequacies in the comprehension of real issues involved. But, since they were adequately equipped with educational expertise, historical research methodology, and a critical sense of analysis, their works are definitely a class apart from the writings of Sikh, Muslim and Hindu historians. While the earlier-European historians have written about the Sikhs with the object of collecting information, the later Europeans have written from a political point of view. Some of them like Earnest Trump have written from a Christian point of view, while some others like Macauliffe have written to appreciate and admire the Sikhs Without any critical analysis. Generally the interpretation and

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approach of the European writers can be termed as a colonial view-point.

There is a deep impact of the Singh Sabha Movement on the modern Sikh writings. The works written under this influence have portrayed Sikh religion and Sikh society as completely distinct from the Hindu religion and Hindu society. The Hindu historians were prompted to write on Sikh history by the singularly Colonialist approach towards the Sikhs. The first among these modern Hindu historians to write about the Sikh history was Gokul Chand Narang, a native of Punjab. He wrote his first book *Transformation of Sikhism* in 1912. He was a member of the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reformist movement. Despite his being a *Sehajdhari*[15] Sikh belonging to a Sikh *Sehajdhari* family, he was influenced by the contemporary political environment. But inspite of such an influence, his book became so popular among the Hindus and the Sikhs that it has been published in its seventh or eighth edition. This is his greatest achievement, though his approach is completely opposite to the aims and objectives of Singh Sabha Movement.

Thus, Gokul Chand Narang had, for the first time, presented Sikh history from a new perspective. This perspective described Sikh history from a national point of view. Looked at from this

15 A *Sehajdhari* means a Sikh who believes in the Sikh Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib but he does not have unshorn hair and beard like the Sikhs.

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point of view, Sikh religion belonged as much to the Hindus as it did to the Sikhs. Guru Nanak was considered to be the religious leader of the whole of India as has been quoted above. Similarly, the role of the Sikhs during the freedom struggle against the British in 1947 was also applauded. In nutshell, by branding Sikh religion as the reformist movement in Hinduism, the entire history of the Sikhs was branded as the war of independence for India.

Although the statement that the Sikh religion was a reformist movement in Hinduism and that the Sikhs were an integral part of Hindus rankled in the Sikh mind, yet the simultaneous declaration of the Sikh struggle being a freedom struggle for India's independence was duly acknowledged by the Sikhs. As the earlier part of the statement appeared to be less objectionable in the light of the later appreciation of the Sikhs and their role. Gokul Chand Narang's book came to find whole hearted acceptance among all the Sikh scholars. Till date, this book is more popular among the Sikhs than among the Hindus. Gokul Chand Narang is quoted more often whenever reference is made to the nationalist or the universal point of view of Sikhism.

After Gokul Chand Narang, Indubhusan Banerjee wrote Sikh history employing a thorough research and historical methodology. Whereas Gokul Chand Narang was involved in

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contemporary politics, Indubhushan Banerjee was a professional historian free from any kind of political involvement. Narang, being a Punjabi, he was brought up in a *Sehajdhari* Sikh family. Indubhushan Banerjee, being a native of Bengal, was far removed from any kind of Sikh influence. Despite this, Indubhushan Banerjee's book *Evolution of the Khalsa* in two volumes became equally popular with the Sikhs. It occupies a place of prominence in the history syllabi of the Universities in Punjab. Guru Nanak's teachings were described as those bringing about a reform and revival of the Hindu religion. According to this view, "Sikhism, no doubt, had its start in a protest but it was a protest against conventionalism and not against Hinduism. In Nanak, perhaps, the reaction reached its limit and thus gave a poignant tone to many of his utterances which at first sight give the impression that his was destructive and revolutionary ideal. But there is no satisfactory evidence to show that he intended to over turn the social order[16]. He was out not to kill but to heal, not to destroy but to conserve.[17] Battles fought by Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh were regarded as those undertaken by the Gurus for the protection of the Hindus. Likewise, Creation of the Khalsa and the armed struggle waged by it were sought to be undertaken for liberation of India.

16 Indubhushan Banerjee*, Evolution of The Khalsa*, vol. I, Calcutta, 1979, p. 144.
17 *Ibid.*, p. 145.

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The role played by the Khalsa in uprooting the Mughal empire thus ending the centuries' old slavery of India and saving Punjab from becoming a part of Afghanistan or Iran came to be admired. Sikh Scholars have been continuously reading, analysing and quoting from this book, despite their differences of opinion over certain issues.

After these writers, there was a groundswell of interest among the Hindu historians to write on Sikh history. The writings of the Sikh historians have not found as much favour among the readers as the writings of the Hindu historians. One reason for their wide acceptance is that the Hindu historians have written Sikh history with a greater sense of devotion than is found among the Sikh historians. Since the Sikh historians' primary concern in their writings has been to highlight the distinction between the Hindus and the Sikhs, their writings suffer from a bit of negativity. In other words, the Sikh historian's approach is defensive in favour of the Sikhs. Prominent among these historians are Ganda Singh, Teja Singh, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, Bhai Veer Singh, Fauja Singh and Kirpal Singh.

Hari Ram Gupta's writings exceed all other in the glorification and eulogising of the Sikhs, though the attitude of all the Hindu historians is somewhat similar. However, there is a slight difference in approach and analysis among them. Whereas

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Indubhushan Banerjee's writings are more critical, those of Gokul Chand Narang and Hari Ram Gupta are more conciliatory and reverential. Similarly, Sita Ram Kohli and N. K Sinha have written about Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the similar patronising vein in which the early Hindu historians have written about the Sikh Gurus. Maharaja Ranjit Singh has been portrayed as the singular Indian monarch who did not allow the British to advance towards the northwest across the river Sutlej till the last breath of his life. It means the Hindu historians have regarded Maharaja Ranjit Singh as their hero. Both Sita Ram Kohli and N.K. Sinha differ in their approach and exposition. Whereas Sita Ram Kohli's approach is more conciliatory than critical, N. K. Sinha's approach is highly critical and hence more historical. Since A.C. Banerjee belongs to the later period than that of the above four historians, his overall approach and exposition is also somewhat similar.

Such an interpretation of Sikh history by the Hindu historians has been termed as nationalistic interpretation. It is because of this approach that Sikh history has found acceptance in the curriculum of the Universities of other Indian states. In whatever way the term National historian may have been interpreted from a national point of view, the present thesis interprets the writings of national historians on Sikh history in the light of the aforesaid discussion. The five, nationalist historians

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who have been included in this thesis for study are Gokul Chand Narang, Sita Ram Kohli, Indubhushan Banerjee, N. K. Sinha and A.C. Banerjee.

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A STUDY OF GOKAL CHAND NARANG'S TRANSFORMATION OF SIKHISM

I

Gokul Chand Narang was the first Punjabi Hindu writer who wrote a regular history of the Sikhs for the first time in early twentieth century. No regular Sikh history was written before Gokal Chand Narang by even the Sikhs themselves. Though that was the time of Singh Sabha's impact yet Narang represents the views quite contrary to the Singh Sabha. Before Narang, Macauliffe had written on Sikh Religion in six volumes in 1909 and it was written under the impact of Singh Sabha movement. During the early two decades of the twentieth century, chief Khalsa Diwan was dominating the Sikh academic field but Gokul Chand Narang was out of the discipline of this movement too. Thus, it was really a surprise that a non-Singh Sahba and non-chief khalsa Diwan writer wrote the Sikh history quite contrary to the contemporary movements and still the account written by him captured the sentiments of whole of the Sikh community. Actually, Narang wrote this book as an answer to Macauliffe's work. Though he does not mention it yet his arguments are quite contrary to the arguments given by Macauliffe. While publishing the fourth edition of his book in 1956, only then Narang indicates that the separation of Sikh identity from the Hindus was

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advocated only by Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha and Macauliffe. In his own words, "The foundation of this movement (separation) was laid by Sardar Bahadur Bhai Kahan Singh, who, together with Mr. Macauliffe, carried on the crusade of separation from the Hindus by publishing a book in which he tried to show that the Sikhs were not Hindus."[1] Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha and Macauliffe were advocates of different Sikh indentity. According to them the Sikh Religion, from the very beginning, was a separate religion from the Hindu Religion. But Narang's argument is that Sikh Religion is a separate religion, no doubt, but the fundamental motive of it was to liberate the Indian society from the shackles of foreign rule. Thus, in spite of the so many discrepancies, historically and logically the book is still popular among the Sikh scholars. Gokul Chand was himself a devoted *Sehajdhari* Sikh and he was also a staunch member of Arya Samaj, a reformatory movement of the Hindus. There was a sharp political contrast between the Hindus and the Muslims. The Sikhs were the third important force in the Punjab, Whatever group could win over the Sikhs that would have been the upper hand over the other group. In this light or with the motive of forging Hindu-Sikh unity, Narang wrote Sikh history in 1912 and he was successful in his attempt.

1 Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, New Delhi, 1998, p. 218.

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II

Gokul Chand was born in 1878 at Baddo ke Gosain, a small village in the district of Gujranwala, in the west Punjab (Pakistan). There lived a holly saint, named Rama Nand Gosain and the place was named after his name. Baddo ke is a proper name and Gosain was its identification. Therefore, the village was known as Baddo ke Gosain. Narang belonged to a Sikh *Sehjdhari* family of Narang-Arora sub-cast. He got his first lesson in Sikhism from his father Lala Mool Raj Narang to whose memory he dedicated his book with "the deepest reverence" recalling that it was he "who was the first to have inspired me with an interest in Sikh scriptures and Sikh history".[2]

Gokul Chand Narang's interest in the subject was augmented by his early education at the local Gurdwara school where he learnt how to read and understand the *Granth Sahib*. Then he went in the mission school, Gujranwala in 1896 for formal education and passed his matriculation. Pursuing his higher studies he passed the M.A. examinations in history and topped the list of successful candidates from Punjab and Calcutta Universities in 1901 and 1902 respectively. He was a brilliant student throughout his studies. He stood second in his F. A. (Faculty of Arts) and B.A. (Bachelor of Arts) examinations.

2 These Words are given in the front page of the book: *Ibid.*

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Immediately after getting degree in Master of Arts he was appointed lecturer in the D.A.V. college, Lahore, He held this position for a period of nearly five years. Here, he came in close contacts with some of the best Arya Smajist minds, such as Mahatma Hans Raj and the effect produced by them on him is revealed by a small book, *Message of the Vedas,* written by him during this period.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth centuries, there was a powerful reformatory movement among the Hindus of the Punjab. This was the Arya Samaj Movement. It aimed at recapturing the purity of Aryan life in the Vedic Age and repudiated all those evil and degrading practices which had subsequently crept into Hinduism. These are the idol worship, caste-system, polytheism, divine incarnation, child marriage, prohibition of widow-remarriage, female infanticide etc. etc. Gokul Chand Narang made a positive response to all these ideas of reform. His previous grounding in Sikhism had virtually prepared him mentally for such a response of mind. "The combination of Sikh and Arya Samaj influences in him produced a kind of attitude which in some essential respects differed from the typical attitude of both Arya Samajists and Singh Sabhaites".[3]

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3 Fauja Singh's article "Gokal Chand Narang" in Fauja Singh(ed.), *Historians And Historiography of The Sikhs* New Delhi, 1978, p. 265.

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Although there were many things in common between the Arya Samajists and the Sikhs yet they were at that time engaged in a bitter mutual controversy. The main reason of this bitterness was, the Arya Samaj leadership (Swami Daya Nand Sarswati) was critical of the Sikh Gurus and used the disparaging language against Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikh Religion and the Sikh scripture *Guru Granth Sahib*. Besides this, the Samaj was making vigorous attempts to reconvert, by means of *Shuddi* concept, the lower classes of Sikhs to Hinduism. The Sikhs did not like these actions of Arya Samaj and retaliated by asserting their independent identity and denying that they had any connection with Hinduism. The *Shuddi* crusade launched by the Samaj was fiercely resisted by the Sikhs. The more the Samajists claimed Sikhism to be a branch of Hinduism, the more the Sikhs insisted that they were a distinct and separate community. This action and reaction broke up the close relationship which had existed between the two sister communities.[4]

Gokul Chand Narang was one of those Arya Samaj leaders who did not want the clash between the Sikhs and the Hindus. Therefore, he effected a reconciliation of the positions and held that the Sikh Gurus were great leaders of Hinduism, worthy of all respect, who rendered marvellous service to the cause of

4 Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* (1839-2004), Vol. II, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p.147.

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Hinduism such an outlook representing the golden mean between the two extreme points of view was, as indicated before, a natural outcome of the Sikh and Hindu influences operating on his mind. Another thing which had a powerful impact on his mind was his anti-Muslim bias. He did not want the Sikhs to get away from the Hindus and develop their relations with the Muslims. This was his inner-Sikh and outer-Arya-Samaji look both combinedly were operating simultaneously to shape his policies.

The whole atmosphere in India and particularly in Punjab at that time when Narang wrote his book was, thus, surcharged with bitter Hindu-Muslim controversies. By and large, Muslims had boycotted the congress and were carrying on a virulent propaganda against the Hindus. They were trying hard to worm themselves into the good books off the officialdom. The Government was also keen on wining them over so as to take the wind out of the sails of the Congress, and a secret understanding between the two led to the foundation of all India Muslim League in 1906 with a host of favours to follow. The Congress leadership of the period, too, could not divest itself of its predominant Hindu bias and mostly conceived of Indian nationalism in terms of Hindu culture and civilization.[5] In the words of Prof. Sri Ram Sharma "Punjab at the opening of the century (twentieth) formed one of

5 . Fauja Singh, *Historians And Historiography of The Sikhs*, p. 266.

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the two Indian provinces in India where the Muslims formed a majority of the population. The British Government had started conciliating the Muslims, particularly when educated Indians started making a demand for a share in the Government of their own country. They were wooed... Hindu Muslim relations in the Punjab had become more than a little strained by the assassination of Pandit Lekh Ram by a Muslim in 1897".[6]

The first decade of the twentieth century was fermented with communal controversy in the Punjab. The Muslims were granted the right of separate electorate though they were in a majority, constituting, 55percent of the population of the Punjab according to the census report of 1921 and 57percent according to the census report of 1941.[7] The Sikhs who were in a microscopic minority in the Punjab, were not given this right and nor were the Hindus. This made the communal problems acute between the Muslims and the non-Muslims. The Punjab was the only province where the majority community had been granted the right of separate representation.

Sir Malcolm Darling wrote, "Nowhere is communal feeling potentially so dangerous and so complicated as in the Punjab. It is dangerous because of the Punjab's virile hot headed people and

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6 Sri Ram Sharma, *Punjab In Ferment In the Beginning of the of 20th Century* (Sita Ram Kohli Memorial Lecturer -1965). Punjabi University, Patiala, 1966, p. 6.

7 Kirpal Singh, *The partition of the Punjab*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1989, p.5. See also Khushwant Singh, *History of The Sikhs*, vol. II, pp. 218-19.

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complicated because there is a third and not less obstinate party the Sikhs who were more closely knit together than either Hindus or the Muslims."[8] The Moti Lal Nehru report rightly recognized the magnitude of the communal problem in the Punjab "a very potent factor to be taken into account is the presence of the strong Hindu minority side by side with the Muslim majority and Sikh minority. The Punjab problem has assumed an all India importance and we cannot look at it as an isolated case arising in a single province."[9]

In this new set up the Sikhs were the biggest losers. The Hindus were also not happy with the right of separate electorate to the Muslims. Therefore, the Hindus and the Sikhs tried to come close to each other. In 1910, when Gopal Krishan Gokhale came to Amritsar, he was given a hearty welcome by the students of the Khalsa College. Their enthusiasm was reflected in the fact that they even unyoked his horses and themselves pulled his carriage to the college, where his lecture was listened with thunderous applause.[10]

Thus, the early decades of the twentieth century were dominated by an upsurge of religious nationalism which, in the case of Hindu leaders such as Arbindo, B.P. Paul, B.G. Tilak and Lajpat Rai, was in fact Hindu nationalism. Gokul Chand, as an

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8 Sir Malcolm, *At Freedom's Door*, London, 1949, p. XII.
9 Motilal Nehru, *All Parties Conference Allahbad*, 1928, p. 57.
10 K.S.Talwar's article, *'Early phases of the Sikhs Rennaissance and Struggle for Freedom '*in *The Punjab Past and Present*, Punjabi University, Patiala, October, 1970, p. 295.

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Arya Samajist, was powerfully influenced by the national thought of the time and his writing on Sikh history bear an indelible imprint of that. He could hardly escape the impact of such acrimonious controversies. Rather, as in the case of most of the Hindus of the time, his prejudices against the Muslims had deeper roots because these had come to him by inheritance. Although the Muslims had been in India for more than eight hundred years, as yet they were regarded as aliens and their rule in India was viewed as a brand of foreign rule which had spared no efforts to extirpate Hinduism. Significantly, in the heat of the prevailing controversies both *Singh sabhaite* Sikhs and Arya Samajists shared this thinking regarding the Muslim Community. The basic approach or thought-pattern adopted by Gokul Chand Narang in writing of his book *Transformation of Sikhism* needs to be seen in the light of his psyche shaped by the aforesaid influences and prejudices. His preface to the first edition makes a clear mention that he was "a devoted admirer of the Gurus" since his childhood and consequently had "made Sikhism his lifelong study". Thus, with his devotion to Sikhism he wrote his book *Transformation of Sikhism* and got publish it for the first time in 1912 from Tribune Press, Lahore.

This book was submitted for the degree of Ph.D and consequently, he was awarded the degree of philosophy of

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Doctorate by the Swiss University of Berne. Though he had a mind to add to it a second volume dealing with the period following the decline of the Sikh Missals, but his desire remained unfulfilled and he had to bring out more editions of the same volume. Subsequently, making what additions he deemed fit and proper suiting his convenience and altered circumstances.

The second edition of the book was brought out as late as 1945. The demand being very great the entire stock was exhausted within a year and still another edition of the book was brought out in 1946 with the slight alterations and improvements. The author added three chapters in the fourth edition in 1956. These chapters are: first Struggle for Khalistan; second, The Regional Formula; and the third, Counter Agitation by the Hindus. In the fifth edition one more chapter was added in 1960. Thus, with the revised and enlarged edition the period of Sikh history is brought up to the struggle for Punjabi Suba by the Akalis.

The book neither pretends to be a chronicle of the Sikhs nor a dissertation on the Sikhism itself. "This is a little treatise on the Sikhism the author has aimed at presenting to the general reader a concise but complete view of the various processes which led to the transformation of Sikhism from the religious sect into a political organization."[11]

11 Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism,* (Preface), p. 12.

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The author has dealt with the subject neither in the spirit of a hostile critic nor a votary of Sikhism, though he has been, since his infancy, a devoted admirer of the Gurus and has made Sikhism his life long study. The author has tried to put his arguments before the readers in an impartial manner, the results of his long and careful study of the history of the Sikhs from the advent of Guru Nanak to the beginning of the Misal period in the Punjab. Three appendices are also attached in the end of the book to give the general reader an idea of the contents of the nature of Sikhism as a religious and social system.

One thing is to be noted that the first edition of the book came out in 1912 while the second was in 1945. This gap of thirty-three years transformed his entire look of an historian. His interpretation and approach of Sikh history was entirely changed. A brief idea of his interests and activities during these years may be essential to understand the functioning of his mind at the time the later editions were being put through. After his return from England, he practiced for some years at the Calcutta High Court. Then he shifted to Lahore and started practicing at the Punjab's Chief Court. When the Rowlett Bills agitation was on, he emerged as one of its local leaders and played an active part for which he was soon arrested and put behind the bars for a short period. This was followed by a brief spell of his association with the Indian

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National Congress. In 1920 he joined the Swaraj party founded by C.R. Das and Moti Lal Nehru and later in 1923 was elected to the Punjab Council as a Sawrajist. But he was not happy with the Congress on account of its policy to support the Khilafat movement. His deep-rooted prejudices against Muslims made him look upon the Congress support to the Khilafat movement as an imprudent and undeserved concession to Muslim communalism.[12] Therefore, he resigned his membership of the Congress in 1924. Two years later he became an active member of the Hindu Mahasabha. For several years he was President of the Punjab branch of the All India Hindu Mahasabha and along with Bhai Parmanand dominated its politics. For his devoted services to the cause of this political organization he was elected President of the All India Hindu Mahasabha Session held at Akola (Maharashtra). Another important thing which had great impact on his mind was his appointment in 1930 as Minister for Local Self-Government and Industries of Punjab Government. He continued to serve in that capacity till 1937. After that although he held no position at the ministerial level yet he continued to serve as a member of the Punjab legislature till 1946.[13] As a legislator he was a prominent leader of the opposition and he distinguished himself as a

12 Fauja Singh (ed.), *Historians And Historiography of The Sikh*s, pp. 278-79.

13 To see the political activities of G.C. Narang in detail Please see Lionel Carter(comp. and editor), *Punjab Politics, 1936-1936: The Start of Provincial Autonomy* (Governor's Fortnightly Reports and other key Documents), Manohar, New Delhi, 2004, pp.50,81,149,252,260 and 361.

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champion of Hinduism.[14] Still another important factor in the shaping of his attitude was his deep involvement in industrial enterprise. He had made lot of money during the twenties and thirties and had developed much interest in business. In his own province he was one of the pioneering leaders of industry. In 1920 he started the Punjab Sugar Mills Co. Ltd. and established a sugar Mill in the district of Gorakhpur. This was followed later by a few more Mills of the same kind. Besides, to promote speedy industrialization in Punjab, an Act was passed by the Punjab Council under his stewardship. By 1946 he had come to be recognized as a sugar magnate.[15]

As the result of all these influences working on his mind, four things come out very clearly. His faith in Hindu nationalism was further reinforced. With his being thrown into the vortex of Hindu Mahasabha politics, it was no longer a matter of mere intellectual conviction with him, because he was now among the top Hindu leaders publicly and actively striving for what he thought to be the good of his community. Since the activities of the Hindu Mahasabha were mainly directed against the Muslim League, Gokal Chand's anti-Muslim feelings received a further dose of strength. Again, being influenced by the Hindu Mahasabha politics and also by his personal reactionary

14 *Ibid.*, p. 279.
15 *Ibid.*, p. 279.

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bourgeois interests, he developed a dislike for the Indian National Congress and its politics and began to advocate a pro-British line as the best policy under the circumstances for the Hindus. The Muslim League enjoyed certain advantages because it was bolstered up by the British as a counterpoise to the Congress. Therefore, if the Hindus, too, adopted a pro-British attitude instead of supporting the hostile attitude of the Congress, the Government might be persuaded to revise its sympathetic policy towards the Muslim League. All of these tendencies are, directly or indirectly, reflected in the four additional chapters printed in the second and third editions.[16]

III

Sikhism to Gokul Chand Narang was a movement "in Punjab having as its chief aim the raising of Hindus as a nation. He writes Guru Nanak seems to have thoroughly diagnosed the case of the Hindu community of his time and found out that a religious revival was the only remedy which could save it from impending destruction".[17] Describing the deplorable condition of the Hindus of Punjab, he attributes it most of all to the persecution of Hindus by Muslims during the period of their political domination. "The wave of proselytism had spread there with an overwhelming force and the Punjab contained the largest

16 Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, pp. 279-80.
17 *Ibid*, p. 18.

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number of converts to Islam. Hindu temples had been levelled to the ground. Hindu schools and colleges had made room for mosques. All vestiges of Hindu greatness had been obliterated. During the four and a half centuries that intervened the overthrow of Anangpal and the birth of Guru Nanak, history does not tell us the name of a single Hindu in the Punjab. Those who had escaped conversion had lost almost all that lends dignity and grace to life and distinguishes religion from superstition and cant".[18]

He remarks that Guru Nanak felt most unhappy at this state of affairs and "at once made up his mind to devote his life to the service of his nation and by precept and by example, bring his people back to religion of simplicity and sincerity, to wean them from the worship of stock and stone, restore to them to pure worship of their ancient forefathers and make them once more able to stand their ground as a nation."[19] It, he adds, "leavened the whole Hindu thought in the Punjab and improved the moral and spiritual tone of the whole people. Here was now, for the first time after ages of dissension and discord, a hero whom every Hindu could call his own and of whom every Hindu could justly feel proud"[20] He sums up the impact of Guru Nanak's teaching as follows: "When he died he had already transformed the lives of thousands of Hindus who had come in his personal contact with

18 *Ibid.*, p. 19.
19 *Ibid.*, p. 21.
20 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

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him and by his noble life and inspiring teaching, had produced a new atmosphere in the country in which no one could breathe without being healthier and stronger in the spirit. Nanak left the Hindus of the Punjab immensely better than he had found them.[21] Cunningham's comments truly speak the truth in these words, "It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform and to lay those broad foundations which enabled his successor Gobind to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality, and to give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal with the highest, in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes."[22]

The task undertaken by Guru Nanak was continued after him by his distinguished successors. To Narang they were all great Hindu heroes. Among them he makes special references to the 9th and 10th Gurus. "Guru Tegh Bahadur was the acknowledged head of the Punjab Hindus from 1664 to 1675 AD was generally looked upon as a champion of the Hindus. Consequently his execution was universally regarded by Hindus as a sacrifice for their faith".[23] Writing about Guru Gobind Singh he remarks: "The object that the Guru set before himself was to infuse a new life into the dead bones of Hindus, to make them forget their differences and present a united front against the

21 *Ibid.*, p. 27.
22 Cunningham, *History of The Sikhs*, New Delhi, 1985, p. 34.
23 Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, pp.49.

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tyranny and persecution to which they were exposed in one work, to make once more a living nation of them and enable them to regain their lost independence". Summing up the achievements of Guru Gobind Singh he mentions: "He had broken the charm of sanctity attached to the Lord of Delhi and destroyed the awe and terror inspired by the Muslim tyranny. Guru Gobind Singh had seen what was yet vital in the Hindu race "and he resumed it with promethean fire".[24] At another place he writes: "They (Hindus) had religion but not national feeling. The only way to make a nation of them was to make nationalism their religion. And Guru Gobind Singh did make nationalism a religion with them, and all that was calculated to foster a national sentiment was incorporated as articles of faith in this new creed".[25] This is the acceptance of Cunningham's comments that "The last apostle of the Sikhs... effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people, and filled them with a longing for social freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of what purity of worship which had been preached by Nanak, Gobind saw what was yet vital, and he relumed it with promethean fire."[26]

Speaking in the same spirit, he regarded the Gurus' followers as 'the advance guard of Hinduism". Simple and uneducated though, they possessed the qualities of faith, devotion

24 *Ibid.* p. 98
25 *Ibid.* p. 80
26 Cunningham, *History of The Sikhs*, p. 75.

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and earnestness, by virtue of which "they led the way and drew the whole Hindu Punjab after them".[27] Though the followers of the Sikh Gurus (Sikhs) are compared with the early Aryans. It is totally an unsuitable example but it was done due to his Arya Samajist influence.

Gokul Chand Narang's view of Sikhism as a Hindu movement aiming at the national regeneration of Hindus led him into the problem of how to characterize and adjust in his thought-pattern the emergence of the distinctive personality of the Sikh community. He was well aware of the fact that as the Sikh fraternity advanced; it created independent institutions of its own, marking it off clearly from the general body of Hindus. But he did not feel baffled and solved the problem by saying that the development of organization was necessitated by the need to carry on the mission of Guru Nanak in an effective manner. He makes a clear-cut reference to it when he deals with the appointment of his successor by Guru Nanak. "Although the object of Guru Nanak was simply to leaven the social and religious thought of the Hindus, and to improve the general tone of their moral and spiritual life and he had never thought of founding a sect, yet he was anxious that his work should continue after his death. With

27 Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 28 (f. no. 2).

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this object in view he appointed as his successor a Khatri, Lehna by name".[28]

The author proceeds further to trace what he calls transformation of Sikhism which has given the book its title. Judging from that, transformation of Sikhism appears to be the principal theme of the work but actually it is no independent theme but is just a part of the larger theme of Hindu national regeneration. Viewed as such, the process was inherent in the system of Guru Nanak. The non-sectarian character of his teaching and his emphasis on reconciliation of religion with secular life provided "the seed which under the fostering care of Nanak's successors grew into a gigantic tree of Khalsa power".[29] This is clearly brought out in the very first paragraph of the first page of the text. "The seed which blossomed in the time of Guru Gobind Singh had been sown by Nanak and watered by his successors. The sword which carved the Khalsa's way to glory was, undoubtedly, forged by Gobind Singh, but the steel had been providing by Nanak who had obtained it, as it were, by smelting the Hindu ore and burning out the dross of indifference and the superstition of the masses and the hypocrisy and pharisaism of the priests".[30]

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28 *Ibid.*, p. 27.
29 *Ibid.*, p. 26.
30 *Ibid.* p. 17.

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The point to be noted here is not so much that there was a process of evolution but his strong plea that what happened in the time of the latter Gurus particularly Guru Gobind Singh, was “the natural product of the process of evolution that had been going on ever since the inception of Sikh brotherhood”. He has even gone to the extent of suggesting, by way of implication, that the founder of Sikhism approached the problem facing him from the national point of view though by the nature of things he had to restrict the immediate scope of his work to the spiritual and moral education of his people, that is to say, Hindus. All subsequent developments in the fold of Sikhism, in this way, are interpreted as springing from the original planning and chartering of the course of Sikh movement in the time of Guru Nanak. The author recognizes the important role played by the growth of institutions under the early successors of Guru Nanak, as also by the factor of persecution Sikhs suffered at the hands of the then Mughal government. But the role of all such factors is regarded as no more than that of certain helping circumstances which provided the necessary conducive climate in which the fulfillment of the founder's dream was aided, even accelerated. The term transformation used by the author, thus, signifies transfiguration rather than any radical

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marking the change of Sikhs from peaceful devotees to fanatical warriors.[31]

Under Guru Arjan, Sikhism made long strides. He gave the Sikhs their scripture, the *Adi Granth*, which "served as a code of sacred as well as secular law" He gave them their Mecca by building Harimandir Sahib (Temple of God) in the midst of the Tank of Immortality, Amritsar. He founded the town of Tarn Taran where also he built a beautiful temple. This furnished the Guru with a Sikh centre in the heart of the Majha and greatly helped in spreading Sikhism in this tract lying between the Ravi and the Beas rivers. Guru Arjan founded the Masand System which, in the words of the author, was "the beautiful edifice of self-government for the Sikhs in the heart of the Mughal empire".[32] Another step taken by Guru Arjan Dev was the popularisation of horse-trade "which was calculated to encourage adventure and enterprise among his followers".[33] The results of all these measures of the Guru were tremendous. In the words of the author: "The character of Guruship had already been changed by the adoption of the rule of hereditary succession. Now that the number of followers multiplied, the resources increased and the Church was developed into a sort of State. Guru Arjan changed his mode of living so as to suit the present condition of the community over which he

31 Fauja Singh (ed.), *Historians And Historiography of The Sikh*s, p. 270.
32 Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 15.
33 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

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presided".[34] The author further writes "Though himself a man of simple habits and great humility, his *Durbar* became a place of splendour and magnificence and the palatial buildings and tents and horses and treasure gave it the look of a princely court".[35] He further remarks: "As a matter of fact the Sikhs had made great advance under the pontificate of Guru Arjan. A state, peaceful and unobtrusive, had been slowly evolved, and with the Guru at its head as *Sacha Padshah*, the Sikhs had already become accustomed to a form of self-government within the empire".[36] The growing organization of Sikhism, according to Gokul Chand Narang, brought it into direct confrontation with Mughal authorities. To this he attributes the real cause of trouble with the government. He writes: "The compactness which the rising community of the Sikhs was assuming under Arjan would of itself have brought the royal wrath upon the Guru's head".[37] The martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev in 1606 introduced a new element affecting the transformation of Sikhism. The next great impetus which stimulated the growth of the Sikh power and proved the immediate cause of its transition into a political organization was that received from the persecution to which they were systematically subjected by the Muslim Government of the day. To

34 *Ibid.* p. 44.
35 *Ibid.,* p. 45.
36 *Ibid.,* p. 46.
37 *Ibid.,* p. 46.

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prove the validity of his contention he devotes one full chapter to Sikh, or Hindu as he prefers to say, martyrdoms that occurred during the period of the Gurus as well as in the 18th century.

The prosecution, fine, torture and death which Guru Arjan Dev had to suffer were "signal blasts, as it were, to rally the physical forces of the Sikh theocracy".[38] Guru Hargobind, son and successor of Guru Arjan Dev, put on two swords, representing *miri* (temporal authority) and *piri* (spiritual authority) respectively, indicating his firm determination to resist by arms, if necessary, the forces of tyranny. With this end in view, he entered upon a well thought out programme of militarization for his young community. As was expected, some armed clashes occurred with government authorities but despite his very slender resources he came out with flying colours in all of them. The results of the new line of policy were of far-reaching importance. The author says: "Not only was it made clear to them (Sikhs) that worldly pursuits were quite compatible with the deepest religious spirit and highest piety and to bear arms in defence of their homes and hearths was a paramount duty but that continued successes had made them realize their own power and the weakness of the Mughal Government".[39]

The most radical steps in the transformation process were

38 *Ibid.* , p. 60.
39 *Ibid.,* p. 65.

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effected in the time of the Tenth and the last Guru, Guru Gobind Singh. The execution of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur by Aurangzeb had given him a clear idea of the gravity of the situation facing the Sikhs. The reforms carried out by him fitted the rising community not only to overcome the immediate dangers of shock and consternation but also to work for the long-run solution of the problem. Comparing his achievements with those of his predecessors, the author writes, "Guru Nanak had considerably elevated the morals of the Punjab Hindus, and other predecessors of Gobind had done something to make a peaceful organization of them. But the work of evolving a body of men inspired by the sane and high political aspirations was reserved for the exceptional genius of Govind".[40] Obviously, the reference here is to the creation of the Khalsa by the Guru. Gokul Chand Narang gives an elaborate account, in three chapters, of how he created this body, what motivated him in doing so and of the ordeals through which it had to pass under his leadership. This marked, according to the author, a very long stride forward in the process of transformation of the Sikh community. The Sikhs were now changed from a body of peaceful religious devotees to a national and political organization committed to strive for the good of Hindus and having "pugnacity and valour" as its "most important features".[41] The Guru ransacked the ancient Hindu

40 *Ibid.*, p. 79.
41 *Ibid.,* p. 72.

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literature to sift and collect its heroic content and moulded it into a dynamic national ideology for his Khalsa. He taught his followers, to use the words of the author, "to regard themselves as the chosen of the Lord, destined to crush tyranny and oppression and look upon themselves as the future rulers of their land". [42]

After Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikh movement embarked upon an active political career. Banda Bahadur who was nominated by the Tenth Guru as temporal leader of the Khalsa to carry on his work after him and was commissioned to proceed to Punjab poste-haste and deal with the Mughal authorities there, has been depicted by the author as a great Hindu hero. This aspect as well as Banda Bahadur's contribution in the transformation of the Sikh community comes out clearly when he sums up his achievements: "Guru Gobind Singh had diverted the attention of his followers from the plough to the sword and had set the seal of his sanction on war and bloodshed if the cause of justice and righteousness could not be otherwise vindicated. He had sown the seed, Banda reaped the harvest. The Guru had enunciated principles, Banda carried them into practice. Gobind had destroyed the awe inspired by the Mughal despotism. Banda completely broke the charm of its invincibility. The Hindus, after centuries of subjection, realized under Banda that they could still fight and conquer, and when he fell, the dreams of Khalsa supremacy inspired by Govind were considerably nearer the point

42 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

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of realization''.[43]

So far the study of Banda Singh Bahadur is concerned, Narang's method of documentation is quite scanty and inadequate. As a matter of fact, Syad Muhammad Latif,[44] Karam Singh Historian[45] and Macauliffe[46] had written on Banda Singh Bahadur but after perusing Narang's account it seems that he did not consult these accounts. He has not edited his sources he has consulted in a detailed and proper manner. For instance while stating about Guru Gobind Singh's widow, Mata Sundri ji, had won over by the Government and then she issued a letter to all Sikhs not to have anything to do with Banda. Narang mentions his source only as *Panth Parkash* without giving any detail about the author and which *Panth Parkash* is he reffering to.[47] For Narang, Banda failed in his mission "as his glorious career was cut short by his sacerdotal ambition, incomprehension of the true nature of Sikhism, the machinations of the Mughal government and the demorlisation which for a time Farukh Siyar's persecuting hand spread into the ranks of the Khalsa.[48]

Though Banda Singh Bahadur could not stabilize his state for a long time yet his contribution in the process of paving the

43 Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 112.
44 Syad Muhammad Latif, *History of The Panjab*, (1891), New Delhi, 1964 (reprint), pp. 274-281.
45 Karam Singh Historian, *Banda Kauntha*, Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar, 1907.
46 Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, vol. VI, Oxford, 1907.
47 *Ibid.*, p. 113.
48 *Ibid.*, p. 114.

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way of political sovereignty for the Sikhs is emphatically recognized by Gokul Chand Narang when he writes that in 1768 "the seed sown by Nanak had now, thanks to the talent of his successors, the great military genius of Govind and the unconquerable spirit of Banda, blossomed into a rich crop." Also Banda's great success in military expeditions gave Sikhism a prestige and a power which had never yet been associated with it, not even during the time of Guru Gobind Singh.

It can be said about Gokal Chand Narang's account of Banda Singh Bahadur that though he presents Banda Singh as champion of Hinduism he does not fail to recognize his contribution, in raising the prestige and power of the Sikhs as well. Such a conclusion perhaps emerges due to the combined influences of Sikhism and Arya Samaj on his mental psyche.

The history of Sikhism from the fall of Banda to the permanent occupation of Lahore is a record of a long life and death struggle between the declining power of the Mughals and the rising state of the Khalsa. Gokul Chand Narang studies the ups and downs of this struggle at fairly good length and traces the story in his usual spirit of admiration down to the year 1768 the Khalsa Commonwealth extended from the Jamuna to the Indus. "The nation started with the rosary and ended by snatching the scepter from the oppressing hands of its tyrannical masters. The

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political organisation of the Sikhs was now complete and the sovereignty of the land of Five Waters' had now completely passed to the children of the Khalsa to be kept in custody for a greater power which was after a century to mould its destinies for the future."[49]

The subject of the study as the author planned it originally, really ends here with the completion of the process of evolution in 1768. All that comes after this, is the result of his large plan of writing a two volume history of the Sikhs. Preface to the first edition of Narang's account clearly mentions: "The process of transformation was completed by 1768 when the Sikhs occupied Lahore and the narrative might as well have been left there, but as the author intends to begin his second volume on Sikh history with the rise of Ranjit Singh, he has thought it advisable to fill up gap between the occupation of Lahore and Ranjit Singh's accession by giving a brief account of the *Misals* which ruled simultaneously in various parts of the Punjab during that period."[50]

IV

So far the account of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is concerned Gokul Chand Narang regards him as a great Sikh and Hindu hero. "Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the beau-ideal of Sikh chivalry. In

49 *Ibid.,* p. 144.
50 See the preface of Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, Lahore, 1912.

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him the Sikh power was at its zenith. Not only the Sikhs but the whole Hindu nation felt that in him the Sun of Hindu glory had once more risen in the political horizon of India. They showered upon him their heartiest blessings. They looked upon him as their liberator and their protector, one who after centuries of barbarous attacks from the North, hurled back the invaders and raiders to their mountain lairs. They bestowed their unstinted love and affection on him and revered him as a God-sent guardian of their hearths and upholder of their national honour". The author approvingly quotes one of his aunts as having remarked that "the Maharaja was an Avtarji, gifted with miraculous powers." He adds further "Even after half a century of British rule the hearts of the Hindus turned back to Ranjit Singh as a national hero".[51] He recalls how in his childhood when senior members of his family used to tell him stories of the Maharaja's great feats of chivalry, he considered him unfortunate for having missed the opportunity of seeing him. Referring to his death, the author writes in the same vein; "When he died in 1839, there was universal mourning in the country and everyone felt as if he had lost his own father and guardian. With his death, it was said everywhere, the Punjab had become a widow"[52]. With this kind of bent of his mind, the author showers his praise on the Maharaja and his administration. The

51 Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, New Delhi, 1998, p. 177.
52 *Ibid.,* p. 182.

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entire account runs into six pages and every word of these pages is in the appreciation of the personality of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This may well be explained by the fact that the author's principal concern was with the projection of the heroic image of the Maharaja and whatever did not appear to him to be directly essential to this end was ignored.

Whereas Ranjit Singh was a great hero, those who followed him were very small men, "sadly lacking", according to Gokul Chand, "in political sense". "The Sikh fighting forces consisted of illiterate ploughmen entirely devoid of any feeling of patriotism. Their leaders, with few exceptions, were either too selfish or too cowardly, miserably lacking in national spirit and patriotic sentiments. Like rats deserting a sinking ship they slunk away to save their own skins".[53] The fateful decade following Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death and ending in 1849 with total extinction of the Khalsa rule forms the subject of the twentieth chapter entitled 'After Him the Deluge'.

Taking an overall view of the history of the Sikhs during the British period, Gokul Chand Narang's account is very inadequate. He takes practically no notice of the great changes which occurred in the Sikh community under the impact of Singh Sabha movement. The Sikh community would not have been what it is

53 . *Ibid.,* p. 187.

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today but for this movement. Another equally important, if not more, is the heroic role which the Sikhs played in our country's struggle for freedom. By his exclusive emphasis on the pro-government attitude of a section of the community, the author has provided the reader with an interesting insight into the functioning of his own loyalist mind.

Whatever Gokul Chand Narang had written before the Indian independence, only that portion can be regarded, a serious account, a historian could produce. In evaluating the achievements of Sikh movement the author, in real sense, identified himself with the Sikhs. But what portion he produced after the independence that is biased and purely political oriented. After independence he added four new chapters containing 39 pages from 198 to 235 and also added two pages in the already written chapter named "Future of the Sikhs." This information is given by the author himself in the italicized words. He writes, "This chapter was written in the year 1946. Since then much water mixed with blood, has flown under the bridges of the Ravi. It is not necessary to make any changes in what was then written under this heading but as certain political changes have occurred it has become necessary to say a few words."[54]

Now the question is that what were those changes which

54 *Ibid.*, p. 241.

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occurred after the year 1946? The major change was that the Indian sub-continent was divided into two parts namely Pakistan and India. The Muslims got Pakistan and Hindus got India but the Sikhs were badly crushed. They got their destruction. The politics of free India also changed. Before the partition, the Hindus of the Punjab need the help of the Sikhs to face the Muslim League's onslaught. Now the Sikhs were handicapped and the Hindus got political domination in the East Punjab. So there was no need of Sikh help. This impression is quite visible in the chapters which were added in 1956. In these new chapters which cover the years 1947 to 1956, the author calls this period of nine years, as the '*Akali yug* in the history of the Punjab' for the reason that it was packed with Akali agitations for setting up of a Punjabi-speaking state. In his account of these agitations and the events following upon them, Gokul Chand has cast himself in an entirely new role though not without its traces in the second and third impressions of the book. It is not the role, as claimed by him in his preface to the Second Edition, of an historian whose ''first loyalty is to truth'', or of ''a humble missionary of Hindu- Sikh unity''. Nor is it the role of a writer who looked upon the Sikhs, as he did in his first edition, as the vanguard of the Hindu community and spearhead of Hindu nationalism. On the other hand, it is the role of a biased writer who completely identifies himself with the forces

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of resistance to the Akali demand for reorganization of Punjab on the basis of language. This comes out very clearly from the way he describes the agitation of the Hindus to the Regional Formula which the Government of India had offered to the Sikhs as a sop for the rejection of their demand for Punjabi Suba by the States Reorganization Commission. Thus, it is a piece of political writing rather than a writing of history based on an objective study of the issues involved.

However, paradoxically speaking there was no real shift in the author's basic thinking. From the beginning he was a staunch votary of Hinduism. But being an Arya Samajist and a believer in religious reforms and also on account of pro-Sikh influences on his mind in his early days, he viewed the rise of Sikhism favourably, styling it as an institutionalized expression of Hindu nationalism. His attitude towards the Sikhs retained its wide sympathy and understanding so long as the Sikhs had not developed a fully conscious political identity of their own. When after independence the Sikhs began to demand a linguistic state on the lines of other such states in the country, Gokul Chand Narang regarded it as anti-Hindu, though it was not true, and thus showed that his loyalty to his own community was far stronger than anything else. Going deeper with the matter, even this loyalty was just a veneer for his anxiety for the economic

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interests of that business section of the Hindus who had the fear, albeit wrongly, that their interests would he jeopardized by the formation of a Sikh-dominated Punjabi-speaking state.

This is the same historian who has written before independence that the achievements of the Sikhs, in fact was the achievements of Indian nationalism. In the new portion added to the chapter on the future of the Sikhs, he makes a categorical observation that "the Sikhs have no political future as an independent community".[55] The favourable circumstances in which they had some princely states and enjoyed special privileges of communal electorates and reservation of seats have disappeared and a new situation has emerged in which they will have to depend completely upon the central government. He sounds a note of warning that in case they failed to play their cards well, they may find themselves in a tight corner. "They have, however, nothing to fear as long as they keep on the right side of the Central Government and scrupulously refrain from any communal outburst. They must be fully conscious that their population in the Indian Union is not much more than 1% while Muslims and Christians, not to speak of the Hindus, are far more numerous than the Sikhs and if communal consideration have at all to be kept in view in making high appointments, all the other

55 *Ibid.,* p. 242.

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communities may legitimately claim their share".[56]

On 23rd February, 1969 the learned author died. With his death, the hope of new chapter has also lost. But strongly enough, the publishers, on their own has entirely changed the outlook of the book in the new reprint in 1972. They have dropped the earlier title of the book for what reason we are not told and had been renamed by its publishers as *Glorious History of Sikhism-From Spiritualism to Militarism*. Another significant feature of this edition is that all those chapters which related to the years after the annexation of Punjab to the British Empire in 1849 have been completely deleted. From the historical angle the edition carries no more significance.

With this we comes to the end. Broadly speaking, it may be said that the book has grown with successive editions except for the last one which applied the reverse gear. All the same, the work produced in 1912 is, by far, the best portion of the book. On the whole, it is an interpretation rather than a detailed analytical work. The interpretation, too, does not seem to flow from any objective study of historical data. Rather, the attempt seems the have been made in term of certain pre-conceived ideas and tendencies.

During the very life-times of the author Punjabi Suba came

56 *Ibid.,* p. 242.

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into existence. The author saw this formation with his own eyes but wrote nothing about it. The Punjabi Suba (the state reorganized on the basis of language) was given an area of 20,254 square miles (50,000 Square KM) comprising the districts of Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Hushiarpur, Kapurthala, Nawan Shehar, Jullundhar, Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Mukatsar, Moga, Faridkot, Mansa, Bathinda, Barnala, Sangrur, Patiala, Ropar, Fatehgharh sahib and Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar(Mohali). It has a population of two and half crores of whom 56-60 percent are Sikhs.[57] The establishment of Punjabi Suba succeeded in gathering nearly 80 percent of the Sikh population in one state. The only other large concentration of the Sikhs was in the capital city, Delhi where they formed a little over Seven percent[58] of the population and numbered a little over ten lakhs. Thus, the Sikhs have been well-established not only in the Punjab but also throughout India. It is also notable that the Sikhs achieved their well-established position not by appeasing the central Government but by their own unity and strength. When the author died in 1969, there was a Government under the leadership of the Akalis in the Punjab. These things proved that the fore-casting made by the author proved totally wrong.

The chief merit of the study from the historical angle lies in

57 See also Khushwant Singh, *History of The Sikhs*, Vol. II. (1839-2004), Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 307.
58 *Ibid.*, pp. 307-08.

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the thread of continuity that the writer has been able to trace and present in his work. He has been at great pains to show that what he has called transformation of Sikhism is indeed a transfiguration because it is a study of continued development on the foundations laid down by the founder-Guru Nanak Dev. All that came to pass subsequently, particularly after the last Guru handed over complete charge to the Khalsa, was no intrusion of any extraneous element, but was a natural phenomenon of change, of course aided by changing circumstances, occurring within the conceptual framework of the founder of Sikhism. There was no such thing as a disruption in the basic character of the movement, as some of our writers on Sikh history have ventured to suggest.

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SITA RAM KOHLI AND HIS WORKS

I

Sita Ram Kolhi a renowned scholar of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, lived from 1889 to 1962. Thus, he belongs to the last decades of 19th century and the first six decades of 20th century. At this time two personalities were rising in the field of Sikh academics. The one is Karam Singh historian and the other is Sita Ram Kolhi.[1] Karam Singh historian got his inspiration from the Singh Sabha movement while Principal Kohli got inspired by the historical research in the western methodology and by the western teachers H.L.O. Garett, John Thompson and Ramsay Muir. Karam Singh historian wrote about the Sikh Gurus while Sita Ram Kohli wrote on the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Sita Ram Kohli was born on February 28, 1889 at Bhera. Bhera was a historical and flourishing town which was also a tehsil headquarter at that time. It is in the Shahpur District of the west Punjab which is now in Pakistan. Sita Ram Kohli belonged to the middle class family which professed Sikhism in sehajdhari form. Sita Ram got his early education at the government high school Bhera. After doing matriculation he got his admission in the D. A. V. college at Bhera. But after a short period, He joined

1 See also Fauja Singh's article, 'Sita Ram Kolhi' in Fauja Singh(ed.), *Historians And Historiography of The Sikhs,* New Delhi, 1978.p. 220.

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the government college Lahore where he did his graduation and post-graduation. His post-graduation was in history. As he was one of the best student in the batch that passed out, he was granted the Alexandra Research Scholarship[2] by the Punjab university Lahore, for conducting research in history. This was a turning point in the life of Sita Ram Kolhi. This scholarship inspired him for research in historical studies.

Luckily for Sita Ram Kohli, Prof. Ramsay Muir visited the Department of history at the Punjab University, Lahore in 1913-14. He remained at the university for six months from October, 1913 to March, 1914. The lectures delivered by him inspired Sita Ram Kohli for research in history particularly in the field of Punjab history.

Prof. Ramsay Muir's lectures at the forth annual meeting of the Punjab Historical Society at Lahore on January 31, 1914 spelt out the vast scope of historical research in India. Two positive results followed from this. The first was the reinvigoration of the Punjab University Historical Society as a forum of discussion with a regular journal of its own where selected research papers could be printed. The second was the realization of the necessity of a thorough search for the records of the Khalsa period preceding the British rule in the Punjab. As the idea of promoting historical

2 A scholarship of the value of Rs.100 per month. As Sita Ram had shown an early talent for historical research, he was the first scholar to be awarded this scholarship in 1915.

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research as the active backing of some high-ups in the official hierarchy, the work was immediately taken up with zest and earnestness.[3]

Sir Michael O'Dwyer was the governor of the Punjab at that time. He was personally interested for a research in the history of Punjab. After listening the lectures of Prof. Ramsay Muir he ordered an all-out research in civil Secretariat for the *Khalsa Darbar Records*. Resultantly, a huge mass of dust-laden bundles were discovered in the shelves of the store of the secretariat. These bundles, bound tightly, were lying neglected in the secretariat building. No-body touched these bundles after 1849 when the Punjab was annexed by the Britishers. These records had passed into the possession of the British at the time of annexation of the Punjab in 1849 but for long seventy years they remained bound in bundles unused by anybody. Sita Ram Kohli was the first to untie these bundles and satchels of the records and he prepared a catalogue of the records of each department, giving date, number and other necessary particulars of each document. These catalogues were subsequently published by Punjab government in two volumes under the name *Catalogue of Khalsa Darbar Records*.[4]

In appreciation of his outstanding talent, the Punjab government gave him appointment as a lecturer in history at the

3 Fauja Singh, *Historians And Historiography of The Sikhs,* p. 221.
4 See Sita Ram Kolhi, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh* (Punjabi), Delhi, 1953 (Bhumika),pp 9-10.

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government college Lahore, in the Punjab Education Service in 1919. He remained at that college for 14 years.[5] During this period he not only carried on his research activities but by his mature guidance and first hand knowledge of the abundant historical material available in the Punjab government office, also helped a large number of post-graduation students and scholars to write dissertation and monographs. But he also retained his connections with the Punjab Government records office of which he held an additional charge of Deputy Keeper of the records. He was, at this time also a permanent member of the Punjab University Historical Society and took keen interest in the organization and deliberation of the Sikh History Society at Lahore in 1931.[6]

In 1933, Sita Ram Kohli (afterwards Principal Kohli) was transferred to Ludhiana where he was the Vice Principal under Principal Harvey. There he lived in the portion of the same house which was once a residence of ex-rulers of Afghanistan Shah Zaman and Shah Shuja, a hundred years earlier. Principal Kohli felt honoured to live in that house.[7] At present this house has been raised to the ground.

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5 Harbans Singh (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Sikhism*, Vol. IV, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1998, p. 217.
6 Fauja Singh, *Historians And Historiography of The Sikhs,* p.222.
7 Harbans Singh (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Sikhism*, Vol.IV, p. 218.

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In 1940, Sita Ram Kohli was appointed principal at Government College, Hoshiarpur from where he was transferred to the Government College, Rohtak in 1944. This college was the only Government College in Haryana at that time. He retired from his post in 1945 and in January, 1946, he was offered appointment as principal of Government Ranbir College, Sangrur. He was also given the additional charge as Superintendent Education Department, Jind State. Sangrur was a capital headquater of Jind State at that time. After sometime he was given a post of Secretary Education Department of the State. In 1948, the princely states of cis-Sutlej were merged in PEPSU. Thus a new state came into existence. Therefore Principal Kohli ceased to be a secretary Education but retained the post of principal upto November 1951. After this, he finally retired from the post of principalship and settled down at Rohtak in his newly built house. This house was named *Gosha-i-Afiyat* which means retreat.[8] Towards the end of his life he felt victim to the pernicious disease of *Asthma*, which ultimately carried him off in July, 1962. Thus principal Kolhi spent 73 years of his age.

Sita Ram Kohli enjoyed every moment of his life and he sacrificed this enjoyment of his life to the study of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. God also blessed him with many enjoyful moments. First,

8 *Ibid.*, p. 218.

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throughout his life Sita Ram Kolhi remained at the top of government service. Secondly, he was married in the well-to-do family of Ruchi Ram Sahni of Lahore.[9] Ruchi Ram Sahni's daughter Lilawati was a wife of Sita Ram Kohli. She was a talented lady who was always a great help to her husband in his research project. She gave birth to two daughters and two sons.

Sita Ram Kohli was so devoted to his work that he continued arduous labour over the years ever since he had entered upon the career of research. This research had greatly undermined his health during the later years of his life because he was terribly effected by *Asthma*, a disease which probably had its roots in his persistent work for several years on the archaic folios of *Khalsa Darbar Records*, usually emitting awful smell. But such was his devotion to work that he never permitted his disease, or falling health to come in the way of either his personal research, or his guidance to, or discussion with research students and scholars.

Sita Ram Kohli was associated with so many historical societies. He was a member of Punjab University Historical Society, Lahore. He was also associated with the Indian Historical

9 Ruchi Ram Sahni, Kohli's father-in-law was a professor of Chemistry at Government college, Lahore. Prof. Sahni was very fond of visiting the hill stations every year. He rarely missed his club and was an extremely good host. He lived well and was fond of good food and good company. He drove his own car and maintained a lavish table-spread. He spend his summer at Gulmarg, an attractive hill station in Kashmir. He would inspire his pupils to read more and more and write with exactness and brevity.

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Records Commission and a corresponding member till death. He was also associated with the Indian History Congress which, in recognition of his valuable researches in the field of Punjab History, elected him President of the Sikh History Section of the second session of the Indian History Congress held at Allahabad in 1938. His presidential address on this occasion gave a thought provoking and analytical account of the different phases and sources of Sikh History. Besides the address, he read on this occasion a paper bearing the title 'Ahmed Shah Abdali and the Sikhs (1748-65)'. Two years later he presented another paper at the Indian History Congress Session held at Lahore in 1940, the title of the paper being '*A Book of Military Parwanas'*[10].

In the light of above discussion, it can be said safely that Sita Ram Kohli's main field of interest and specialization was the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors. Outside of his specialized field, a few attempts were, no doubt, made such as *History of India from beginning to A. D. 1526; Students' Historical Atlas of India;* and *The Indus Valley Civilisation.* Of these the first two were written as text books for school and college students. The third was a better attempt, although his study of ancient Indian history or archaeology was not of the level that he could make any significant contribution to knowledge, it was, at best, a

10 Fauja Singh (ed.), *Historians And Historiography of The Sikhs*, pp. 224-225.

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monograph, produced on the basis of secondary sources, but it must be said to the credit of the writer that the scholarship shown in its writing was high enough to induce the Punjab University to undertake its publication.

As for the area of his specialization, he was fortunate to be initiated into it, at the very outset, by being assigned the task of examining the massive *Khalsa Darbar Records* preserved in the Punjab Government Secretariat, Lahore. As these primary records related to the annual file to the different departments for a period of thirty eight years from 1811 to 1849, the greater part of the Khalsa rule, their close examination gave Principal Kohli a unique grounding in the subject of his study. The grounding thus gained was subsequently improve by the study of some other primary sources, such as Munshi Sohan Lal's *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*, Dewan Amarnath's *Zafarnama Ranjit Singh,* Ganesh Das's, *Fatehnama Guru khalsa Ji Ka*, Shah Muhammad's *Var on the first Anglo-Sikh War*, 1845-46, foreign travellers' and visitors' accounts and British intelligence reports. It was thus on account of his mastery of the original sources that he was considered, on all hands, an authority on the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Principal Kohli's main field of historical research was the history of Sikh empire, 1799 to 1849. All his writings betray maturity of judgment and

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balance. He has a simple and forceful style of writing. He possessed a high analytical mind. He

II

The most important work of Sita Ram Kohli is to edit and compile the *Khalsa Darbar Records*. When professor Ramsay Muir visited to Lahore college he inspired Sita Ram Kohli to come in the field of historical research. Besides this inspiration, the Governor of Punjab Sir Michael O' Dwyer added his elderly appeal for an all out search in the civil Secretariat for the *Khalsa Darbar Records*. The records were in Persian, written in the *Shikasta* hand.[11] It created the difficulties in the process of reading. Principal Kohli was well versed in Persian so he was selected to do this difficult job. The Shikasta handwriting presented acute problem to schematize and systematize the documents in proper historical perspective.[12] But Sita Ram Kohli worked with devotion and diligence for the period of five years. He scanned and catalogued nearly three lakh folios covering the period of 1811 to 1849 of Sikh reign. Writing about his work Sita Ram Kohli himself writes in the introduction of his book *Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, "These records were in the possession of the British at the time of

11 *Shikasta* means that an account written in running hand which cannot read easily.

12 G. S. Nayyar, *Contribution of Principal Kohli to The History of The Sikhs* (Principal Sita Ram Kohli Memorial Lecture), Punjabi University Patiala, 2003, pp.1-2 afterwards as G. S. Nayyar's lecture).

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annexation of the Punjab in 1849 but for long seventy years they remained bound in bundles unused by anybody. I was the first to untie the bundles and satchels of these records and it was with great labour that I became skilled in the art of reading the difficult *shikasta* handwriting of Persian[13]. Gradually, however, I was able to prepare a catalogue to the records of each department, giving date, number and other particulars of each document. These catalogues were subsequently published by the Punjab Government in two volumes, under the name '*Catalogue of Khalsa Darbar Records*'.[14]

The records make up a total of 129 bundles, some of which contain several thousand sheets each. The paper used is of the kind commonly known as Kashmiri or Sialkoti and the sheets, as a rule measure 5"x7.5". Supplementary to these bundles are 15 manuscript volumes, bound in leather, containing duplicates of the orders issued to various government officials and the voluminous correspondence between the *Khalsa Darbar Records* and the Ambala and Ludhiana political agencies of the British.[15]

Sita Ram Kohli prepared the catalogue of each and every department of the military and revenue administration of the

13 Sita Ram Kolhi, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh (*Punjabi*)*, Delhi, 1953,(Introduction), p.10.
14 *Ibid.*
15 Harbans Singh, *Encyclopedia of Sikhism*, vol. II, Punjabi University, Patiala, p. 477.

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Darbar taking in the consideration the respective serial order and dates of rolls of separate units, depicting strength and development of the army at different intervals. The documents in the records fall into four different categories.

The first category is *Darbar-i-Fauj.* It comprises mainly the pay rolls of cavalry, infantry and artillery from which information can be obtained about the composition and strength of the Khalsa army. Service in the Khalsa army was not restricted to any particular class or caste. In 1811, the strength of the regular Khalsa army was 2852 infantry and 1209 artillery. In 1845, the figure had risen to 70721 with 53962 infantry, 6235 cavalry and 10524artillery. The infantry and cavalry had 60 percent Sikhs, 20 percent Muslims and 20 percent Hindus, whereas the artillery regiment were predominantly Muslim and some were commanded by the Europeans. The total expenditure amount to Rs. 1,27,96,482 which was about the one third of the annual revenue of the state. The names of various generals, colonels and commandants also figure in these papers.[16]

The pay rolls reveal that a Commandant's monthly salary ranged between Rs. 60 and Rs. 150; an adjutant's between Rs. 30 to 60; a major's between Rs. 21 to 25; a subedar's between Rs. 20 to 30; a jamadar's between Rs. 15 to 22; a naik's between 10 to

16 See the *catalogue of Khalsa Darbar records*, Lahore, 1927

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12; a Havildar's between 13 to 15; a Sargent's between Rs. 8 to 12 and a spoy's between 7to 8. Even the pay rolls of beldars, blacksmiths etc., attached to the army are also presented. The dates from transfer from one regiment to another or of removal whether by death, desertion or dismissal is invariably noted. The pay rolls and the *jama Kharch* (income and expenditure) papers show not only the expenditure on the three wings of the army, but also income from rents of shops in regimental bazars, sale proceeds of the property of man dying without heirs, and a return of the *inams* or awards bestowed upon infantry officers on the occasions of Dusehra and Diwali. These festivals were celebrated with full pomp and show by the army regiments.[17]

The second category of the papers is *Daftar-i-Mall.* It means the paper concerning with revenue matter. These papers fall under three head-receipts, disbursements, adjustments and the day-book of disbursements (*awarja, tanzihat, roznamcha*). There existed in the Sikh times a well organized system of collecting the revenue and maintaining accounts, including those relating to the expenditure on the royal household. These records also provide the information regarding the reorganization of *ta'alluqas* or administrative units. The general summary settlement of each *ta'alluqas* was undertaken and the areas of cultivable land

17 *Ibid.*

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together with the liabilities and the rights of the landlords over the paying tenants were preserved. The details of the districts and their sub-divisions, the names of their Kardars and Subedars and the estimated annual income of the state from various sources are also given. Likewise, there are in the records the papers pertaining to *Jagirs* of different kinds bestowed upon or assigned to civil and military officers, religious personages and shrines.

The *Toshakhana* papers relate to the royal wardrobe and the Privy Purse and contain inventories' of treasure as well of confiscated properties. Ranjit Singh was quick to take action against the corrupt officers who were made to disgorge their ill-gotten wealth.

From these statistics one may easily trace the growth and development of the army from period to period. Again, each one of the four parts of the book has been prefaced with a concise account of the main inferences emerging from the scrutiny of the records. The volume, thus, is much more than a mere catalogue, as it presents a more or less clear picture of the organization of the Khalsa army, its growth and the administration of its major branches as well as the system of maintaining military records of the different kinds.

These records were, after the partition of 1947, shifted from Lahore to Shimla, which became the summer capital of East

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Punjab. In 1959 these records were again shifted to Punjab State Archives, Patiala, and for third time in 1984, the records were shifted from Patiala to Amritsar.

This project, completed by Sita Ram Kohli, was published by the Punjab Government in two volumes under the title *Catalogue of Khalsa Darbar Records*, Vol–I, from Lahore in 1919. The second volume under the very same title was also published by the Punjab Government from Lahore but in 1927. These volumes are now lying in the different libraries of Punjab,[18] meeting the dire needs of research scholars and coming to their rescue in view of the meticulous and precise treatment more particularly of the military and revenue administration of the great sovereign of the Punjab. The first and the second volumes prepared by Principal Kohli are not only catalogue but also contain a useful and precious account of the administrative system of Lahore Darbar by way of the expedient preface written by the learned historian.

The tremendous success with which Sita Ram Kohli accomplished his first project, admittedly a difficult undertaking, brought his success in his personal career as well. After the expiry of the Alexandra Research Scholarship, he was taken into government service and appointed a lecturer in history at the government college, Lahore. He was at this college for long many

18 I have consulted the copies of *Catalogue of Khalsa Darbar Records* preserved in the Ganda Singh collection of the main library of Punjabi University, Patiala.

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years. During this period he not only carried on his own research activities, but by his mature guidance and first hand knowledge of the abundant historical material available in the Punjab government office, also helped the postgraduate students and scholars to write dissertation and monographs. In view of his good work he was subsequently appointed Deputy Records Keeper, Punjab. He was at this time also a permanent member of the Punjab University historical Society and took keen interest in the organization and deliberations of the Sikh history society at Lahore in 1931. Taking advantage of his long stay at Lahore, he built his own house there.

III

Sita Ram Kohli's widely known book is on *Maharaja Ranjit Singh*. It was first published in Urdu by Hindustani Academy, Hyderabad in 1933. Then it was written (not translated) in Punjabi in 1951 and was published by Atma Ram and sons, Kashmiri Gate Delhi in 1953. At this time he was in Government Ranbir college, Sangrur as a principal. This book was dedicated to his late daughter Kumari Shama Kolhi, who had passed her M.A. Forewording Note is givien by Principal Jodh Singh of Khalsa college, Amritsar. The book has three hundered pages. The book was very rare but the demand was high. Then it was decided to translate it into English by Major(Rtd.) Gurmukh Singh, edited by

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Prithipal Singh Kapur and published by Guru Nanak Dev University in 2002. It has two hundred and six pages.

Sita Ram Kohli "works on Ranjit Singh in Urdu as well as in Punjabi was his first and only attempt to deal with the subject as a whole. Moreover, it represented the sum and substance of his prolonged deliberation on the subject."[19] Viewed from modern standards, it is Sita Ram Kohli who have claim to have been privileged to be a pioneer of serious methodological research on Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his Government. The peculiarity of this work is that material for this has been drawn mainly from Persian contemporary sources like Sohan Lal Suri's *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*, Bute Shah's *Tarikh-i-punjab* and Dewan Amar Nath's *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh* which present a mirror of the events of the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Sita Ram Kolhi's mastery on the original sources of the period made him an authority on Ranjit Singh that has so far remained unequalled beyond doubt. He set a standard of historical scholarship that is not easy to emulate and which is hard to excel.[20]

Sita Ram Kohli started his work on Maharaja Ranjit Singh before G.L. Chopra and N.K. Sinha ventured to produce their doctoral thesis and his interest remained unabated till his death

19 Fauja Singh (ed.), *Historians And Historiography of The Sikhs*, p. 231.
20 Prithipal Singh Kapur (ed.), *Maharaja Ranjit Singh* by Sita Ram Kohli, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 2002 (Introduction) p.xxi.

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in 1962.[21] Sita Ram Kohli possessed a highly analytical mind and all his writing betray relations with the border states, treaties with the British, detailed account of the conquests, the possessing of the Koh-i-Noor, administrative measures, the adventures of the Maharaja along with six appendices comprising mainly of useful information by way of listing of the European and other top officials employed in the court of the Maharaja with minute and meaningful details and an elaborate treatment of books quoted in the text.

In addition to the *Khalsa Darbar records* Sita Ram Kohli consulted other significant sources for his book, Maharaja Ranjit Singh which includes the writings of Osborne, Sir Henry Fane, Captain Wade, C. Metcalf, Sir Lepel Griffin, Grey, Forster, Moorcraft, Sir.C.Gough, Alexander Burns, Charles Hugel and others. Gazeeters have also not been lost sight of which provide a flood of light besides the British point of view.

Sita Ram Kohli appreciates the policy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh towards the Britishers. According to him both of the parties benefitted from the Treaty of Amritsar 'because without it, both would probably may crossed swords. However this treaty presents

21 See J.S.Grewal's article "understanding Ranjit Singh" in Prithipal Singh DharamSingh(ed.), *Maharaja Ranjit Singh*(commemoration volume), Punjabi University, Patiala, 2001, p.266.

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an excellent example of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's perception of events that presented themselves before him'.[22]

Writing about the glory of Ranjit Singh's Kingdom and his relations with the Britishers during the period of 1828-1839, Sita Ram Kohli comments ' By this time, the Sikh kingdom had reached the pinnacle of its glory and progress. The fame and power of the lion of the Punjab was at its Zenith. He had conquered the Muslim provinces of Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar and had annexed them to his Kingdom. He was acknowledged as the master of all the hilly regions and plains of Punjab. He had plans in his mind for the conquest of Ladakh and Sindh. The sovereigns of far-off countries considered it a matter of pride to establish friendly relations with him.'[23]

Writing about the great personality and prestige of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Sita Ram Kohli remarks 'In World History, there are very few such instances where a person rose from the position of meager resources like Ranjit Singh and founded such a big Kingdom, and still did not indulge in moral laxities or become target of the ire of his defeated foes. It was a matter of great pride and honour for Maharaja Ranjit Singh that ever since he held the reins of government in his hands, he never sentenced anyone to death, it was because of his pleasant manners, benevolence and

22 Sita Ram Kohli, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh* (Punjabi), pp. 95-96.
23 *Ibid.*, p.184.

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popularity, that his subjects from a child to the old loved him. Even his sworn enemies kept quiet under the weight of kindness."[24]

IV

Dewan Amar Nath's account was published by Sita Ram Kolhiunder the title *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh* after its due editing in 1928.[25] In the introduction written in English to his edited version of the said *Zafarnama* the editor states that the writer of this work, Amar Nath, has neither given the title of the work in a clear manner nor has he clarified it in a formal way in the text. Three manuscripts of this work were approached by him but no help could be had to decide the very name of the work. The editor received the first manuscript of this work from the house of the writer himself. In this manuscript, the title of the book was given as 'Tawarikh Khalsa' by the copiest. This title was also taken up by the book binder himself but it did not suit the contents at all rather it was irrelevant.[26]

The second manuscript of this work was obtained by Sita Kohli from Rai Sahib Pt. Wazir Chand and the title 'Zafarnama Akbari' was inscribed on this copy with pencil. But this title also

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24 *Ibid.*, p.269.

25 Sita Ram Kohli, *Zafarnama-i- Ranjit Singh* (ed.), Punjab University, Lahore, 1928. I have used the edition of Zafarnama edited by Dr. Kirpal Singh, therefore, this edition will be referred to, in the forth coming references.

26 *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh* (edited by Kirpal Singh), Punjabi University, Patiala, 1983, pp. 289-90.

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lacked in giving a full fledged and relevant description of the subject matter contained in this work. The third manuscript which Sita Ram Kohli was able to approach was from Punjab University, Lahore and it contained events upto the year 1827-28 A.D. In this way it was an incomplete manuscript.[27]

The two manuscripts were scribed by Pandit Raja Ram alias Tota, a Kashmiri Brahman. The first having been completed in A.D. 1857 and the second in 1856 A.D. Principal Kohli observes that since the title of this work was neither traced in the contents of the work nor had the writer given any specific title, it was found advisable to give it the name of '*Zafarnama Ranjit Singh*' as the work refers to the conquests of the Maharaja up to the years 1836-37. Principal Kohli himself writes: "We have therefore, made a sort of compromise and given the name of *'Zafarnama Ranjit Singh'* to the book. As the reader will see, the book mainly deal with the conquests of Ranjit Singh up to the end of the year 1836-37."[28]

Sita Ram Kohli not only adopted a decisive approach in ascribing a title of the book under reference but also made it clear that this work comes to an end with the narration of the events up to the year 1836 i.e. the year of the celebrations of the marriage of Kanwar Naunihal Singh. It is also stated that this work does not take into account in the last three year of the reign of Maharaja

27 *Ibid.,* pp. 291-92.
28 *Ibid.*

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Ranjit Singh. It is also apparent that Dewan Amar Nath, the author of this work witnessed the rise of the British and the fall of the Sikhs. Sita Ram Kohli further writes that the absence of the account of the last three years of Maharaja's reign has far lessened the value of the book and has deprived us of the valuable information. We have not been able to understand the logical reason of this neglect. Sita Ram Kohli writes:

"It (the manuscript) …. Abruptly comes to close with the description of the celebrations in connection with the wedding, in Sambat 1893, of Prince Naunihal Singh, the grandson of the Maharaja….. it is much to be regretted, however, that although the author lived through the stormy period of Sikh rule and saw with his own eyes its final extinction and the building up of the British power on its ruins, he did not continue his narrative beyond 1835-36 viz., about the three years before the death of Ranjit Singh himself. So far as we can judge no valid reason can be assigned for the serious omission which robs his work of the value it would otherwise have possessed."[29] The same views have been expressed in the second version of the editing of Dewan Amar Nath's work under consideration. There also the year of the

29 *Ibid.*, p. 284.

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winding up of this book is deemed to be 1836, the year of the wedding of Kanwar Naunihal Singh.[30]

Dewan Amar Nath has given a very captivating and indispensable data about the far-flung areas of the kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh namely Kasur, Bannu, Kashmir, Kandhar, Dera Gazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan, Multan, Mankera, Attock, Wazirabad, Dhani, Khushab, Hazara, Shah Mukim, Pak-pattan and the hilly tract etc. this information has been collected by the Dewan Amar Nath from the contemporary and well informed individuals. This collection of facts has been scattered in this work in the shape and form of evidence. The writer is a fine example in himself in giving the details of the campaigns and polity of the Maharaja commenced conquering territories at the unripe age of 13 years. He encouraged the victorious in the battle fields, kept a stern eye on the persons committing tyranny, made the foundations of justice firm and solid, extended protection to the poor and expanded the activities of welfare day in the day out. Most of the rebels submitted before him on account of the diplomatic measures and joined him. The Maharaja gave an excellent proof of his sagacity in dealing with the Chathas by means of his political awareness.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. XXII-XXIII. See also Ganda Singh, *A Bibliography of The Punjab*, Patiala, 1966, p. 146.

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Dewan Amar Nath has touched almost all the aspects pertaining to the Maharaja's activities and has hardly neglected any aspect of the royal administration. The significant details given in the concise volume include: the domination of the Maharaja over the *misl* chiefs and granting *jagirs* to them, the conduct of the affairs with the chiefs of the *misls* more particularly with Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, the preparation of the campaigns near and far from the capital and the details of the awards and honours after the conquests, the opposition of the Afghans in the frontier provinces and the success of the royal armies, the administration and governance of forts and fortresses in the kingdom, the description of the forts of Mankera and Mangla, the administration of the territories, the appointments and promotions of the courtiers and employees. The punishments and discipline, the appointment of Sardar Rattan Singh Gharjakhia as the *Adalti* of Lahore, capturing the hearts of the ruled, time to time relationship of the Maharaja with the British, Shah Shuja, Mai Sada Kaur, the conquest of the salt mines and their administration, the births of Kanwars Kharak Singh, Sher Singh, Dalip Singh, Naunihal Singh etc., and the necessary details about them, the description and the portraiture of the Dogras and the Europeans, the purbias etc., in the enforcement of the Maharaja's military set up, the possession of *Koh-i-Noor*, the

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characterization and interpretation of Moran and Gul Bahar Begum, the disease and demise of the Maharaja and the succession of Kanwar Kharak Singh of the throne of Lahore etc.

Hence the manuscript under reference gives the account of the years of the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh which were seen by the author. It is the regret of Sita Ram Kohli that Amarnath did not carry his account beyond 1835-36, although he lived through the stormy period of the Sikh rule and till long after the annexation of the Punjab in 1849. The introduction of Sita Ram Kohli for this book contains, besides the note of the historical value of the book, much useful information about Dewan Amarnath and his family and about the title of manuscript copies of the work and also regarding the style of the writer. About the historical value of this account of Sita Ram Kohli himself writes : "Dewan Amarnath's history is not inferior to any contemporary chronicle in point of accuracy of detail, it far excels even the diary of Sohan Lal and the history of Bute Shah in richness of facts of general interest. By virtue of his own position as *Bakhshi* or paymaster of the irregular cavalry of the Khalsa government and because of his family connections, our author enjoyed special facilities for collecting valuable material for his narrative. His father, Dewan Dina Nath, was the Finance minister of Ranjit Singh and as such had the entire charge of the civil, military and

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political records of the Maharaja's Government. The author was personally acquainted with the most of the influential men at the court and this background of general experience of men and things around him stood him in good stead in writing his history.....The book is, therefore, a most important original source of information concerning the reign of Ranjit Singh."[31]

V

Sita Ram Kohli's another edited work is *Fatehnama Guru Khalsa ji ka* written by Ganesh Das who was in the personal staff of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The employees of the personal staff were called *Bhayaas*. These *bhayaas* remained with the Maharaja during all the times in the residence. The Maharaja used to send his personal orders called *Parwanas* to the concerned officers of the Durbar. That was the way that bhayaas were known to all of the external and internal decisions taken by the Maharaja. This is stated by Sita Ram Kohli himself in the introduction of this book.[32]

According to Sita Ram Kohli was own statement, the manuscript was sent to him by his friend Labhu Ram, a librarian of the Punjab University, Library, Lahore in 1925 for my opinion so that the Library could consider it for buying. Sita Ram Kohli states that he was very busy at that time in his other engagements

31 See *Zafarnama* edited by Kirpal Singh, p. 284.
32 Sita Ram Kohli (ed.), *Fatehnama Guru Khalsa ji Ka*, Language Department, Punjab, Patiala, 1970,pp.18-19.

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so he could not go through it properly but he got it copied by his assistant. The assistant copied it in Urdu because he was not good in Punjabi. The manuscript was sent back. Neither the library bought it nor the owner of the manuscript could be contacted. Resultantly, the real manuscript had been lost.

After twenty five years in 1949-50, when Sita Ram Kohli started to edit it, the very script which was copied in Urdu by his assistant was used for publishing. The Urdu script was again transliterated in Gurmukhi and got it published by the Mehkama-i-Punjabi of Punjab Government, Chandigarh in 1951. The editor tells that Principal Jodh Singh of Khalsa college, Amritsar helped him in preparing the manuscript for a press copy. The other person who helped Sita Ram Kohli in the project was Giani Khazan Singh B.A. of Sangrur.[33]

Bhai Vir Singh wrote foreword of the book which covers eleven pages, the introduction given by the editor himself covers the pages from 13 to 25. The editor gives the summary sketch of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's life in thirty pages from 27 to 57. Then starts the original epic. But here also, the editor gives introduction of *Multan yudh* in fourteen pages from 58 to 72. From pages 73 the epic of Multan *yudh* is given. It has four sub-chapters in 279 stanzas, covering 71 pages from 73 to 144. Then the epic of

33 See the introduction, *Fatehnama Guru Khalsa ji k*a, pp.13-14.

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Pishour yudh (the battle of Peshawar) starts. Here also, the editor first gives the introduction of *Pishour yudh* in the pages from145 to 156. Then the epic of *Pishour yudh* is given in three sub-sections, covering 66 pages from 157-223. In the end, the editor gives three appendices duly concerned with epic covering 12 pages from 224 to 236. Thus, the book covers total 236 pages.

The account of Ganesh Das has tremedious historical importance. Though its scope is limited to three important events only, namely the siege of Multan (1818), the battle of Naushera (*Pishour yudh*) 1823, and the fighting against Khalifa Syed Ahmed of Bareily, only the earlier phase, but even so, within the framework of its limited scope it far excels any other contemporary account indigenous or foreign, in richness of detail, in graphicness of account and in liveliness of presentation.[34] The importance of the work has been enhanced by the learned editor with his explanatory notes, appendices and introduction explaining its historical importance. These footnotes and explanations help the readers and thus enhance the value of the work. The introduction and the three appendices given by the editor make it a historical document.

In fact, the details of the battle, the author has given correspond with those recorded in contemporary chronicles. Such

34 Fauja Singh, *Historians And Historiography of The Sikhs*, p.231.

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as *Umdat-ut-Twarikh, Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh* and *Jang-i-Multan*. Ganesh Das has great admiration for Maharaja Ranjit Singh as well as for the Khalsa. His appraisal of the role of the Maharaja in the Sikh body politic is highly perceptive. For him Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the leader of the Khalsa commonwealth rather than a Maharaja or sovereign, and he addresses him as *Singh Sahib* (exalted member of the Khalsa). Ganesh Das attributes victories won in these battles to the Khalsa as a whole and not to Ranjit Singh. Hence the title of his work: *Fatehnamah Guru Khalsa Ji Ka,* means the victory of the Guru Khalsa.

VI

The another edited work of Sita Ram Kohli is *The Var of shah Muhammad.* It is a first Punjabi work which was written by a Punjabi Muslim poet, Shah Muhammad, on the first Anglo-Sikh war 1845-46. This is an epic and this attracted the intentions of Sita Ram Kohli to bring it out for the scholars of Punjab history. Historically, this account is very important being the Indian side of picture given by a writer not far removed from the scene of action depicted in the work. It was written probably in 1846 immediately after the first Anglo-Sikh war.[35] Sita Ram Kohli has labored hard to examine the authenticity of the account. Sita Ram Kohli edited this account and got it published in 1956 for the very

35 Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Jangnama Singhan Ate Firangian Da*(Punjabi), Punjabi University, Patiala, 1999, p.xiv (introduction).

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first time by the Punjabi Sahit Academy Ludhiana again in 1960, the same academy got it published for the second time[36]. The book has 204 pages out of which only 56 pages cover the text. The introduction covers the 119 pages. The book is edited with footnote and explanatory notes. The editor discussed the various aspects in the introduction. The Principal aspects are concerned with the gradual weakening of the Khalsa Kingdom after the demise of the Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the circumstances leading to the outbreak of first Anglo-Sikh war, the details of the battles and the historical value of the account. Thus, after the thorough examination of the account, the editor has arrived at the conclusion that despite the personal opinion of the author, Shah Muhammad, nothing is objectionable and unhistorical in the account. The account is very important source on the subject of Anglo-Sikh war.[37]

VII

We will be failing in our account if we do not include in the above contribution of Sita Ram Kohli, his posthamous book : *Sunset of the Sikh Empire* which is undoubtedly the history of last ten years of Lahore Kingdom, a very crucial period of the history of the Sikhs which was edited by Khushwant Singh and published

36 I have used this second edition in this work. Var Shah Muhammad(Hind Punjab Da Jang-in Punjabi), edited by Sita Ram Kohli, Punjabi Sahit Academy, Ludhiana, 1960.

37 *Ibid.*, pp.108-109.

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by Orient Longmans in 1967. It has been dedicated by the editor to the memory of Sita Ram Kohli rightly applauding him as... "great son of the Punjab and Chief Chronicler of the Sikh". The book under reference is a story of sad agony, how the splendid Court of Ranjit Singh fall a prey in the hand of friction-ridden chiefs and ultimately became the victim of British imperialism.

The writer has very beautifully summed up the situation which led to the down fall of the Empire so strongly built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He points out "... The Durbar, therefore, spilt into many factions fiercely opposed one to the other; held only in a semblance of harmony by the towering personality of Maharaja. When Ranjit Singh died on Thursday 27th June, 1839, these factions came to a head-on clash."

Sita Ram Kohli has rightly cited the tradition which is concerned with the foreboding of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. "The tradition has it" writes Sita Ram Kohli, "that on one occasion C. M. Wade, Pol. Agent, Ludhiana during his interview with Maharaja Ranjit Singh exhibited the map of India to show it to His Highness. The Maharaja either casually or deliberately enquired of him what the red patches on the map denoted. 'The British possessions' was the Agent's reply. Ranjit Singh is said to have turned aside and with a heavy heart told his courtiers *'ek din Punjab bhi lal ho jana hai.*" [38]

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[38] Khushwant Singh(ed.), *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*, Orient Longmans, 1967, p.191.

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Sita Ram Kohli has mostly used contemporary sources in the preparation of this manuscript which include literature produced by the British writers as well as the archival record comprising PGR and the letters of British officers like Captain Wade, correspondence of Clerk of Government, Macnaghten to Government , Lt. Herbert Edwards to Major Hodson of Hodson Horse, Hardinge to Ellenborough, Dalhousie to Currie, Currie's correspondence, dispatches of Sir Huge Gough, Henery Lawerence to the Foregn Secretary, despatches of British news writers, *Life and letters of Edwardes*, *Memoirs of Alexander Gardner*, The Punjab Akhbarat etc. etc., besides several other words like Kahan Singh Banga's ballad 'jangnama'. The English writers whose work have been quoted for evidence and reference include Malleson, Lepel Griffin, Edwardes and Merivale, William Osborne, J. D. Cunningham etc.

All the evidences available to us, contemporary and near contemporary stand witness to the fact that the downfall of the Sikh Empire was quite visible, more so in the after years of the Maharaja's reign. The circumstances went on deteriorating day by day falling into the jaws of British diplomacy. The title of Sita Ram Kohli's work *Sunset Set of Sikh Empire* need no clarification as it is self descriptive and tells the tale of woe how the glorious kingdom set by the Maharaja met its end. Anyway, the role of military

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Panchayats emerged during this period needs to be projected and recapitulated.

After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Punjab became a centre of dissensions among princes, ministers, chieftains, queens, and rival factions. The army gained power and became law unto itself. It ceased to obey the rulers, commanders and generals who were left in names only. In the absence of any supreme political authority, it considered itself to be the custodian of the Sarbat Khalsa. The soldiers did this as it appeared to them as a defensive measure against the desolation of monarchy and the threat posed by the foreign invasion.[39]

As a matter of fact, the troops gained more and more power day by day and ultimately tried to control the administration by forming the *Panchayats*. The *Panchayats* gave it to be understood that the *Khalsa* was supreme, that the government must obey orders, and that the *Rani*, and even Maharaja Duleep Singh were there merely by the grace of soldiery. From July, 1845 onwards the army made Peshaura Singh an instrument to press their own demands. On the death of Peshaura Singh by Jawahar Singh, the army put him to death and carried on reigning supreme. After the murder of Jawahar Singh, no Sardar or courtier was willing to become the Prime Minister. Rani Jindan who was quite aware of

39 G. S. Nayyar, *op.cit.*, pp.177-93.

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her responsibility at this juncture of the career of the kingdom of Lahore persuaded many of her courtiers to become Prime Minister but to no avail. Giani Gian Singh argues that 'they were afraid of the army. The entire business was conducted by the army itself. Anyone disagreeing, was put to death.' Rani Jindan's request was in the long run accepted by Lal Singh who took up the responsibility of this office. With the consent of the Military *Panchayats* and the regent, the work of the functioning of the government was carried on for some period when the Military *Panchayats* expressed their concern over the intention of the British to occupy the territory lying in the South and East of the Sutlej.[40] The Military *Panchayats* which regards themselves to be the embodiment of the *Sarbat Khalsa* and knew it already that the British were determined for the encirclement of the Punjab felt surcharged with enthusiasm. It was under the order of Military *Panchayats* that the Sikh army was fought and was defeated. The country lying between the Beas and the hills were annexed to the British dominions. The strength of Sikh army was considerably reduced. A British Resident helped the Sikhs in administration. The Treaty of Bhyrowal signed on December 22, 1846 made the British the real rulers of the Punjab. Strict discipline was affected in the army and Military *Panchayats* lost their hold. The Punjab

40 Giani Gian singh, *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*(part iii), Patiala, 1970, pp.400-439.

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finally came into the hands of the British after the Second Anglo-Sikh war. There is hardly any doubt that the army fought desperately with unparalleled boldness but was ultimately defeated for want of an integrated position as a whole.

All this reveals a part of state of affairs faced by the Lahore Darbar after the demise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh; the account of this phase as a whole had been so masterly handled by Principal Kohli.

VIII

This is the brief analysis of Sita Ram Kohli's work. It is considerable in itself. But most of it is editing work, from which it may be stated about him that he was more of an editor than an original writer. But his edited work is itself like an original work of Sikh history. His first and foremost edited work was *Khalsa Darbar Records* and this itself is monumental. It is a measure of great achievement that it stands where he left it and nobody since then has dared to resume it. This experience, however, strengthened the urge in him to explore other possible historical sources of the period. Consequently, almost all the original sources concerning the period of Ranjit Singh and post Ranjit Singh were edited successfully by Sita Ram Kohli. The whole career of Sita Ram Kohli was devoted to research in Sikh history and he continued it till his last breath. His health was reduced due to his protracted disease of asthma but he did not leave his

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research. He continued to burn mid-night oil in revealing the precious events of the history of the Sikhs.

In editing the source book he was always very careful and painstaking. His good linguistic equipment stood him in good stead in reading and comparing the texts of his manuscripts. Invariably, he gave footnotes, glossary of technical terms, appendices and introduction throwing light on the manuscript in hand, its historical and literary value and if possible, on the author as well. In this way, he was Known of the responsibilities of an editor. But his constant preoccupation with the editing of newly discovered sources left him little time to pursue the writing of original books. *Maharaja Ranjit Singh* was his only original book in urdu and Punjabi. Though in his last years he wrote another book *Sunset of The Sikh Empire* but unfortunately he could not see it in a published form due to his untimely death.

Thereby, he has laid down the foundation on which the edifice of advanced research may be built by subsequent researchers. He was essentially a pioneer and his work should be assessed as that of a pioneer. It is in this particular sense that he has been often and ought to be called, by way of a tribute, a doyen of Punjab historians of his age. His untiring efforts of commencing to write history bearing upon the period referred above on scientific grounds can never be minimized. A memorial lecture has been instituted in the memory of this great historian since 1965 by the Department of Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala.

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HISTORICAL STUDY OF INDUBHUSAN BANERJEE'S EVOLUTION OF THE KHALSA

I

The impact of Singh Sabha on Sikh society was seen in re-writing and re-interpreting Sikh history according to the Sikh point of view. The Sikh point of view was to show Sikhism as a new religion, separate from both Hinduism and Islam. The Sikhs were not to be considered as Hindus and the Sikh Gurus were not to be considered as the reformers of Hinduism. In this light, the Sikh history was started to write according to the Sikh point of view and Bhai Vir Singh and Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha were the main exponents of this view. M.A. Macauliffe wrote on Sikh religion in six volumes under the influence of Singh Sabha. Macauliffe's work created much hue and cry among the Hindu intellectuals. First Gokul Chand Narang, in 1912, tried to write Sikh history in a way which depicted the teachings of Sikh Gurus as the reformation movement of Hinduism. In 1935, a Bengali intellectual Indubhusan Banerjee wrote his *Evolution of the Khalsa,* Vol. 1 and in 1947 he wrote its second volume. Both the volumes cover the Guru period from 1469-1708. This was the first work on Sikh history written purely in a historical discipline. His *Evolution of the Khalsa* can be regarded as one of the most influential scholarly work of the first middle of twentieth century

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and upto the end of twentieth century it dominated the curriculum of history in the universities of the Punjab. "The work appears to have stood the test of the time primarily because of its intrinsic worth in terms of comprehensive content and scholarly treatment, combining detail with 'synoptic vision', treating the subject 'as part of a bigger whole."[1]

When the work was written in 1935 and 1947 there was time of political upheavals in India. The political movements were carry on by the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress to get India free in their own ways. The Sikhs were on the cross-roads. The Congress leaders were trying their best to woo the Sikhs so that the Hindus and the Sikhs unitedly enforce the British government to give maximum geographical area to India against the Pakistan. During such a critical period *The Evolution of the Khalsa* served very well. "In the context of the contemporary debate on the distinct religious identity of the Sikhs and their agitation for political concessions, the wider Hindu readership probably felt more comfortable with Indubhusan Banerjee's thesis. In the final analysis, Indubhusan Banerjee remained acceptable to the Sikh readership as well because of his essentially sympathetic treatment of the subject."[2]

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1 Indu Banga's article "In the service of Hindu Nationalism: Banerjee's Evolution" in J.S. Grewal (ed.), *The Khalsa Sikh And Non-Sikh Perspectives,* New Delhi, 2004, pp. 197-98

2 Ibid, p. 198.

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We have no detailed information about the early life of Indubhusan Banerjee. Whatever is available to us, is given by A.C. Banerjee in the note given in the first volume of *Evolution of The Khalsa.*[3] Even, the historians like Fauja Singh[4] and J.S. Grewal[5] do no go beyond it while writing their articles on Indubhusan Banerjee.

The late Professor Indubhusan Banerjee belonged to a highly respectable and cultured Brahmin family of Vikrampur *Pargana* in the district of Dacca (now in Bangladesh). He was born in December, 1893, at Mekliganj in the then Cooch Behar State (which is now a district in West Bengal) where his father, the late Bhagabati Charan Banerjee, was a Deputy Inspector of Schools. He passed the Matriculation Examination of Calcutta university in 1910 from the Kishorilal Jubilee High School in the town of Dacca and then studied for six years in Dacca College, which was then the premier educational institution in East Bengal and was affiliated to Calcutta University. He graduated with second class Honours in History in 1914 and took his M.A. in History in 1916 in the first class, topping the list of successful candidates. In 1921 he secured the Premchand Roychand studentship, one of the

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3 Indubhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of the The Khalsa,* Calcutta, 1979, p. viii-ix (Introduction)

4 See J.S. Grewals' article 'Indubhusan Banerjee in Fauja Singh (ed), *Historians And Historiography of the Sikhs,* New Delhi, 1978, p. 239.

5 See J.S. Grewal's article 'Indubhusan Banerjee's *Evolution of the Khalsa'* in the *Proceedings of Punjab History Conference,* Punjabi University, Patiala, 1978, pp. 31-35.

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highest distinctions offered by Calcutta University, for his researches in Sikh History. The degree of Doctor of Philosophy on the same topic, was conferred upon him by Calcutta University in 1939.Joining Calcutta University as a Lecturer in the newly established Post-graduate Department of History in 1919, he rose to be Reader and Head of the Department. He was appointed Asutosh Professor of Medieval and Modern Indian History in 1948. He retired from that high office in 1955. He died on November 13, 1956.

Indubhusan Banerjee had a deeply religious temperament and a serene philosophical outlook on life. This explains his interest in, and understanding of, religious history. His exposition of the religious history of the Sikhs has received a permanent shape in his works. As a man he has left in the minds of his friends and pupils a memory of sweet cordiality, of deep but unostentatious sympathy, and of strong but silent moral influence. He belonged to that vanished generation of devoted scholars who accepted the advancement of learning as the mission of life at the call of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, the greatest educationist of modern India.

II

Calcutta (Kolkata) right from the beginning has remained a great intellectual centre and practically the birth place of modern

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historiography. In fact, 'Calcutta was the nodal point. The Calcutta middle class played a prominent role in creating the dominant forms of nationalist culture and mediated at least some of the new ideas and influences which shaped modern Indian life.'[6] In this tradition a number of *Bengalis* have made a significant contribution to the historical writings on the history of the Sikhs. Their interest to understand the Sikhs and their history is reflected in a number of late nineteenth and early twentieth century works. The historians like Indubhushan Banerjee were the part of that scholarly milieu which became fascinated in the Sikh's illustrious past due to a number of reasons. Their pioneering and outstanding contributions imbibing western historical ideas and methodology have carried the knowledge of the Sikh history much further in.

The principal objective of the present study is to understand Indubhusan Banerjee's perspective of the Sikh history which is clearly discernible in the volumes of the *Evolution of The Khalsa*. Sikh's contact with the Bengal can be traced back to sixteenth century onwards when Guru Nanak[7] and Guru Teg Bahadur[8] visited this region during their eastern tours. Subsequently the

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6 Himadari Banerjee, *The Other Sikhs: A View From Eastern India*, vol. I, New Delhi, 2003, pp.24-25.

7 For Guru Nanak's tour to Bengal see Trilochan Singh, *Guru Nanak Founder of Sikhism*, Delhi, 1969, pp. 193-220.

8 For Guru Tegh Bahadur's travels in Bengal see, Fauja Singh, *Guru Tegh Bahadur: Martyr And Teacher*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1975,pp. 47-51.

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rich and the prosperous Sikh *Sangats* were established in this region at a number of places. The historic Sikh *Gurudwaras* at these places bear testimony to the Sikh Guru's association with the people and places of Bengal. These places find a prominent reference in the works of *Pandit* Tara Singh Narotam's *Sri Gur Tirath Sangreh,*[9] and *Giani* Gian Singh's *Gurdham Sangreh.*[10] The Sikh community in Bengal also contributed handsomely to the growth and strength of the young faith and constantly remained in touch with the land of their seers. Though distant from the centre of activity of Sikhism, yet the faith made a steady headway in this region. The flourishing network of the Sikh *Sangats* was wide spread all over the area. There was hardly a place of importance during the Guru's time where some Sikh *dharmsals* and *deras* were not established. The contemporary Sikh sources, *Vars of Bhai Gurdas*[11]*,Hukamnamas*[12] of the Sikh Gurus and *Janamsakhis*[13] provide ample evidence to these contacts.

After the annexation of Punjab, a large number of *Bengalis* were posted or employed in a number of different fields in response to the administrative needs of the colonial government. They made a lasting and rich contribution to the academic,

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9 Pt. Tara Singh Narotam, *Sri Guru Tirath Sangreh* (Litho), Ambala Printing Press, 1884, pp. 102-3.
10 Giani Gian Singh, Gurdham Sangreh (1921), S.G.P.C. Amritsar, 1999(reprint).
11 *Varaan Bhai Gurdas ji*, S.G.P.C. Amritsar, 1981.
12 *Hukamname*(edited by Ganda Singh), Punjabi University, Patiala, 1967.
13 *Janamsakhi Tradition* by Kirpal Singh, Punjabi University, Patiala.

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administrative and social life of the Punjab by performing their official duties and private activities. In the field of higher education all the colleges of Punjab were affiliated to the Calcutta University prior to 1882, the year in which Panjab University, Lahore was established. During this period and subsequent decades, the field of education in the Punjab was dominated by the *Bengali* educationists who were working in various capacities. The upsurge of militant nationalism in Bengal found Sikh saga of valour during the Mughals and Anglo Sikh Wars a motivating and stimulating factor to the contemporary militant politics of Bengal. A number of writings in Bengali on Sikh history appeared during these decades for inspiring the feeling of nationalism in this region.

The year 1917 ushered in a new phase in the *Bengali* historiography of the Sikhs. This year Sikh History was introduced in the Post Graduate Studies of the Calcutta University.[14] Thus a number of works from the faculty itself and from the other scholars were brought out, which were based not only on the primary and secondary sources available in the various archives and libraries, but on scientific methodology as well. The establishment of the Guru Nanak Chair in Jadavpur University in 1969 was a historic finale in the field of Sikh Studies.

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14 A.C.Banerjee's article "Indubhusan Banerjee" in Fauja Singh (ed.), *Historians And Historiography of The Sikhs,* New Delhi,1978, pp. 239-40.

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III

In his *Evolution of the Khalsa* (vol. 1) Indubhusan Banerjee has given an annotated bibliography that spells out the type of the source materials used by him. Among the Gurmukhi sources, Indubhusan Banerjee considered the *Adi Granth*, as the greatest authority on Sikhism.[15] He writes that some references to historical incidents found in the *Adi Granth* could be regarded as invaluable due to the paucity of records on the history of the Sikh Gurus. Moreover, for Indubhusan Banerjee, the *Adi Granth* is a work of 'momentous importance'.

In regard to the *Vars and Kabitts* of Bhai Gurdas, the learned amanuensis of Guru Arjan, Indubhusan Banerjee writes that 'they mark a definite landmark in the evolution of Sikhism and should thus be regarded as extremely valuable'.[16] Similarly, he considered Bachittar Natak, an autobiography of Guru Gobind Singh, as the work of supreme importance. He found that it contained information on Guru Gobind Singh's mission his early activities and his relations with the Hill Chieftains.[17]

Indubhusan Banerjee has also used the evidence of the Sikh Chronicles. The major works of Sikh literature used by him are *Suraj Prakash or Sri Guru Pratap Suraj Granth* by Bhai Santokh

15 Indubhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa,* Calcutta, 1979, p. 281 (Appendix C).
16 *Ibid.,* p. 283.
17 *Ibid,* p. 284.

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Singh. It consists of several volumes. Significantly Indubhusan Banerjee has used Suraj Prakash as the main source of the pontificate of Guru Nanak's successors".[18] Maculiffee found *Suraj Parkash* as "highly unfavourable". However Indubhusan Banerjee suggests that the work (Suraj Parkash) should be used with 'great caution and restraint'.

Rattan Singh Bhangu's *Prachin Panth Prakash* contained a brief account of the Sikh Gurus, which for Indubhusan Banerjee, was of considerable importance regarding the later affairs of Sikh history. He has also cautioned the scholars to use Giani Gian Singh's *Panth Prakash* with caution.

Indubhusan Banerjee found *Ham Hindu Nahin* by Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha of not much historical value. However, he found Kahan Singh's *Gurmat Prabhakar,* an index to the *Granth Sahib* as extremely useful and his *Gur Shabad Ratnakar Mahan Kosh*, an Encyclopedia of Sikh literature, as a 'work of the highest importance.[19]

Among the Persian sources of Sikh history, Indubhusan Banerjee has hardly used the original texts. Rather he has very largely used their standard translations in English. In the case of Jahangir's autobiography, *Tuzuk-i-Jahagiri,* he writes that 'there is only one significant passage in which Jahangir explains the

18 *Ibid.*
19 *Ibid.*,pp. 285-86.

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reasons which led him to order Guru Arjan's execution. About *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, by Mohsin Fani (Now Mobid), who was a contemporary of the 6th, and 7th Sikh Gurus, Indubhusan Banerjee is of the view that it helps us considerably to distinguish the earlier from the later tradition and must be regarded invaluable'. He also found in *Khulasat-ut Tawarikh* (1695) by Sujan Rai Bhandari of Batala, a few important reference of Sikh history.[20]

Indubhusan Banerjee has used English source as well to complete his *Evolution of Khalsa.* In his opinion, Forsters' *Journey From Bengal to England* was to little practical value so far as the account of the earlier phases of Sikhs history is concerned. Similarly John Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs* (1812) to him appeared to have been written carelessly, helping him not much in his account of the Sikh Gurus. However, Indubhushan Banerjee considered *History of the Sikhs* by Cunningham (1849) as standard work on Sikh history. Its earlier chapters to him were out of date in many places, which required revision.[21] In case of Trumpp's translation of the *Adi Granth,* Indubhusan Banerjee writes that his introductory essays, particularly his translation of the old *Janam-Sakhi,* were useful but needed to be 'handled with caution. He finds Syad Mohammed Latif's chapters on the Sikh

20 *Ibid.,*
21 Ibid., pp. 288-89..

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Gurus in his *History of the Panjab* 'hopelessly inadequate and often marred by anti-Sikh bias.[22] In Indubushan's view, *The Sikh Religion, its Gurus, Sacred writings and their Authors (1909)* by Macauliffe is a monumental work. He considered it as an epoch in the history of Sikh studies. It is noteworthy that Indubhusan Banerjee comments that Macauliffe has not been always fair to Hinduism and the Hindus'. Moreover, he has expressed his regret that 'Macauliffe's great work cannot be adequately expressed. On the other hand, he found "Transformation of Sikhism' (1912) by Gokul Chand Narang 'interesting in its own way but superficial. 'About Sir J.N. Sarkar's comments on the Sikhs in his '*History of Aurangzeb'* (Vol. II), Indubhusan Banerjee writes that his comments on the Sikh Gurus were not historically true and the learned author (Sarkar) was not very well informed and often 'unnecessarily offensive to Sikh sentiment'.[23]

To *sum up* we can say that for the completion of his *Evolution of the Khalsa,* Indubhusan Banerjee has adequately used both the Sikh and non-Sikh sources. It may be noted that he claims to have consulted almost all the major works on Sikh history and religion. Significantly, his assessment of the works of his predecessors is quite evident from the annotated bibliography given in appendix 'C' of his first volume on *Evolution of the*

22 *Ibid.*
23 *Ibid.*, p. 290

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Khalsa[24] It is notable that he has used the later sources with great care. But it may be noted that he mainly based upon the 'monumental' work of M.A. Macaulife and Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha's *Gurushabad Ratnakar Mahan Kosh.*

Moreover he felt that it was not possible to understand Sikhism without attaching the greatest importance to what the Sikhs had to say about it. He remembered Malcolm's comments that "In every research into the general history of mankind, it is of the most essential importance to hear what a nation has to say of itself..." References to Macauliffe or so frequent in his volumes that the reader is left in no doubt about his understanding appreciation of the traditional Sikh point of view. But his criticism of Macauliffe, quoted above shows that he did not surrender his own critical judgement 'the historian's greatest asset' and allow himself to be infected by unprofessional zeal. His conclusions might not commend themselves to some other careful students of the period, but he never made a statement on the basis of the tradition without scrutinising it in the light of other sources and of reason. He laid to track for others in respect of rational treatment of Sikh history in the 16th and 17th Centuries.[25]

IV

24 *Ibid.* pp. 281-91.
25 A.C. Banerjee's article, 'Indubhusan Banerjee', In Fauja Singh (Ed.), *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs,* pp. 244-45.

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Indubhusan Banerjee has devoted one complete chapter to the age of Guru Nanak in thirty pages. In these pages, he has discussed the political, social and religious milieu of the Punjab during the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Though his account of the social milieu of Guru Nanak is not very descriptive. It is rather very sketchy. In comparison to this, we find very comprehensive picture of the society of the times of Guru Nanak in J.S. Grewal's pioneer monograph on Guru Nanak, that was written by him in connection with the quincentennial celebrations of the birth of Guru Nanak. [26]

Indubhusan Banerjee's summary of political developments in North India from the invasion of Timur to the establishment of Mughal rule by Babur is largely based on the Muslim sources. References to Sikandar Lodi's policy of religious intolerance provide the background for Guru Nanak's message of harmony and tolerance. The Guru had no sympathy for "the dogs of lodis" who "spoiled the priceless inheritance, nor did he excuse Babur for the acts of devastation which accompanied his march through the Punjab. Indubhushan Banerjee gives us a graphic picture of political degeneration as a background to his understanding and analysis of the degradation prevalent in religious and social life of the times. His argument is sustained by revealing quotations from

26 J.S. Grewal, *Guru Nanak in History,* Punjab University, Chandigarh, 1969, pp. 31-61

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Guru Nanak's hymns. The reader feels convinced that he is write when he says "at the time of Guru Nanak's advent, religion there was none."[27]

It is noteworthy that Indubhusan Banerjee is highly critical of Guru Nanak's contemporary Afghan rulers for their policy of religious persecution and the atrocities to which the Hindus were subjected to. He writes, 'the Hindu had no cause for gratification at the restoration of order by the Lodi Sovereigns. The 'peace and security' which they, to some extent, enjoyed was more than counterbalanced by the fierce religious persecution to which they were subjected.[28] In this context, he further writes with particular reference to the Lodis policy of religious toleration that the celebrated temples of Mathura were all destroyed and the Hindu places of worship were turned into caravan serais and colleges but even these atrocities seem mild and moderate in comparison with the execution of a Brahman Budhan.[29] On the whole, he has tried to characterize the age of Guru Nanak in the following way: "Guru Nanak lived and worked in an age of transition when North India was moving towards a new readjustment and the old sultanate of Delhi was making way for a new imperialism of a some what more enlightened character." For Indubhusan Banerjee it was

27 Indubhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa,* Vol. 1, p. 50.
28 *Ibid.* p. 34.
29 *Ibid.* p. 32.

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necessarily an age of disintegration and the peripheral or centrifugal tendencies were more or less paramount.[30]

Significantly Indubhusan Banerjee throws some light on the existing rituals among the Hindus and the Muslims. He writes that the spirit of both Hinduism and Islam was hidden beneath a mass of formalities and extraneous observances. Tyranny reigned supreme, the tyranny of might, the tyranny of forms and the tyranny of unity of the Godhead was lost in the worship of numerous avtars and divinities, *Pirs* and *dargahs.* Pilgrimages and empty ritualistic practices had taken the places of the real devotion of the heart. Blind faith and superstition had driven truth away.[31] Not only this, he also refers to the conflict between the religious leadership of the two major communities and the social and political scenario of the times of Guru Nanak in the following way: "The Hindus and the Mohammadans quarreled; the Brahman and the Mullah wrangled, social and political inequalities reigned rampant and there was strife, eternal strife everywhere; all aspects of life, social, religious and political, presented the same spectacle.[32]

V

From the organizational point of view the most important step taken by Guru Nanak was the nomination of Angad as his

30 *Ibid.* p. 22
31 *Ibid.*
32 *Ibid.* p. 146

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successor, which Professor Indubhusan Banerjee rightly regards as "a fact of the profoundest significance in Sikh history"[33] This succession marked the first cleavage between the Hindus and the Sikhs; "it placed the movement under the guidance and control of a definite and indisputable leadership and gave it a distinctive turn at the very outset of its career."[34] Guru Angad "adopted and modified" the *Landa* script which was then used in the Punjab for writing the vernacular and called it *Gurmukhi,* thus giving it "a Characteristically Sikh name together with the seal of religious sanctity."[35] Almost all of the historians on Sikh history are unanimous on this point.[36] He initiated the process which led to the compilation of the *Adi Granth*. He "enlarged and expanded" the "characteristic Sikh institution of the *Langar"* which had already been set on foot by Guru Nanak. These measures saved the Sikhs from "total absorption by the Hindu mass."[37]

From "the supernatural myths and the anticipatory legends that abound in the Sikh Chronicles," Professor Indubhusan Banerjee draws some "sober facts" indicating the importance of the leadership of Guru Amar Das in the evolution of Sikh *Panth.* The foundation of the *bauli* (well with Stairs) at Goindwal provided

33 *Ibid.* p. 146.
34 *Ibid.* p. 147.
35 *Ibid.* p. 156
36 See for example J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs Of The Punjab*, Cambridge University, Press, 2005, p.47.
37 Indubhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of The Khalsa*, vol. I, p. 159.

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for the Sikhs a centre of pilgrimage. Sikhism attracted so many coverts-including Muslims-that the Guru found it necessary to "divide the Sikh Spiritual empire into 22 bishoprics" or *manjis*[38]. There was a split with *Udasis; reforms* in certain religious and social customs widened the gulf between the Sikhs and the Hindus. The foundation of Amritsar was laid by Guru Ram Das and the work was completed by his son and successor, Guru Arjan. As the number of the Sikhs was increasing, Guru Arjan introduced the masand system for collection of offerings. "The dues of the Gurus were paid more readily and unfailingly than even the Mughal revenues."[39] This system stabilised the finances of the Sikh organization; what was more significant, the "Sikhs were gradually accustomed to a kind of government of their own, and began to feel themselves as a firmly organised and strong party within the State."[40]

Indubhusan Banerjee's chapter entitled "Foundation of the Sikh *panth"* gives us a clear picture of the different stages through which the four successors of Guru Nanak carried their disciples till they formed an integrated socio-religious brotherhood with a Guru, a central place of pilgrimage (Amritsar), a code of ideas and conduct, and a sacred book. The compilation of the sacred book "furnished the copingstone to Guru Arjan's strenuous work of

38 *Ibid.* pp. 164-168.
39 *Ibid.* pp. 193-198.
40 *Ibid.* pp. 195-196

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organisation". As a result, with the beginning of the seventeenth century Sikhism had acquired the status of a state within the state.

According to Fauja Singh, under the first four successors of Guru Nanak, nevertheless Sikhism developed into a distinct religion and the Sikh Panth became virtually a state within the Mughal Empire.[41] Indubhusan Banerjee discusses the contribution made by each of the successors towards the socio-religious development and the significance of Sikh ideals and institutions in the development of the Sikh Panth. Resultantly Indubhusan Banerjee seeks the basic causes of conflict between the Sikh panth and Mughal state precisely in the growth of the former into an autonomous socio religious group.[42]

The last chapter of the first volume deals with "Ideals and institutions" Professor Indubhusan Banerjee is practically silent on the metaphysical aspects of Sikhism which, in a passing remark, he identifies with "the *Vedanta* of the *Vaisnavite* brand". It is a pity that he did not elaborate his views on the relations between Guru Nanak's teaching on the one hand and *Vedanta* in its *advaita* and *dvaita* forms on the other. While recognizing the importance of Guru Nanak's contact with Muslim *faqirs* he rejects

41 Fauja Singh's article 'Development of The Sikhism Under The Gurus' in L.M.Joshi (ed.), *Sikhism*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2004, p. 11. See also J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs Of The Punjab*, p. 60.

42 J.S. Grewal's Article 'Indubhusan' s *Evolution of the Khalsa',* in Fauja Singh (ed.),*Historians And Historiography of The Sikhs,* p. 260.

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Carpenter's contention that the founder of Sikhism "attempted to establish a religion combining the higher elements of Hinduism and Islam alike" Instead of discussing the question he expressed his intention to return to it "in a separate monograph", but this promise was not fulfilled.[43]

The 17th century was the period of conflict between the Sikh *panth* and the Mughal *imperium.* This conflict forms the subject-matter of Professor Indubhusan Banerjee's second volume. By the year 1604, the position acquired by the Sikh community was "that of a separate polity within the Mughal Empire" and this "could not but disturb the equanimity of the established State." Sir Jadunath Sarkar ignored the basic antagonism between the Sikh *Panth,* and the Mughal State and dismissed the execution of Guru Arjan by Jahangir as a case of "customary punishment of a political offender".[44] Professor Indubhusan Banerjee quotes an extract from Jahangir's *Tuzuk* to show that it was basically a case of religious persecution. Guru Arjan's political offence was a minor one. To quote Jahangir's own words: "He behaved to Khusrau in certain special ways, and made on his forehead a finger-mark in saffron, which the Indians (*Hinduwan*) call *qashqa* and is considered propitious." This could hardly be treated as participation in the prince's rebellion and as an offence deserving capital punishment.

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43 A.C. Banerjee's article, *'Indubhusan Banerjee',* in Fauja Singh (ed.), *Historians And Historiography of The Sikhs,* pp. 249-250.

44 *Ibid.* p. 250.

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Jahangir's real purpose was to put a stop to what he himself called the Sikh Guru's "vain affairs", i.e., propaganda and conversion, "or to bring him into the assembly of the people of Islam". Neither of these purposes was fulfilled. Guru Arjan courted death, and from this tragic incident commenced the struggle which, to quote Trumpp, "changed the entire character of the reformatory religious movement."[45] Instead of surrendering their faith, the Sikhs fortified themselves for resistance. This process reached its culmination in the days of Guru Gobind Singh.

Indubhusan Banerjee looks upon the pontificate of Guru Hargobind as the beginning of armed resistance. Reacting against the execution of his father and predecessor, he assumed the sword of *miri,* symbolizing his concern with temporal affairs, in addition to the sword of *piri* symbolizing spiritual authority.

For Indubhusan Banerjee, Guru Hargobind "appears to have been a misunderstood man, because the point is mentioned against him that he did not compose a single line of verse whereas the Granth Sahib remains for ever the living embodiment of the achievements of his predecessor in his respect."[46] It is also "sometimes hinted that in other respect he fell short of the high ideals that had guided his predecessors."[47] Guru Hargobind, after

45 Ernest Trumpp, *The Adi Granth*, New Delhi, 1970(reprint), p. LXXXII (introduction).
46 The *Evolution of the Khalsa,* Vol. II, Calcutta, 1980, p. 31.
47 *Ibid.*

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the execution of his father and predecessor, adopted the policy of self-defense under this policy, the Guru ordered his Sikhs to be fully armed so that the attacks of the opponents could be faced. To this policy, Indusbhusan Banerjee terms the militarism of the Sikhs and this militarism was adopted not for self-defense but only to adjust the warlike Jats and "the persons of questionable antecedents". According to the learned author, "the exigencies of his position led Guru Hargobind to enlist even persons of questionable antecedents in his service."[48] The author says "The hope of booty and plunder must have attracted many of these to the Guru much more than any real religious motive and their activities could not but discredit the movement to which they formally belonged."[49] Indubhusan Banerjee sees the adoption of the defensive policy of the Guru as the compulsion because "by the time of Guru Hargobind the Jats formed by far the most preponderant element in the Sikh community and with their accession in increasing numbers new forces were bound o be released."[50]

Indubhusan Banerjee evaluates the Guru as the man and the leader" with the remarks that he was "a misunderstood man" but Indubhusan Banerjee himself misunderstood him and, thus, misinterpreted his achievements. Though he contradicts the

48 *Ibid.,* p. 34.
49 *Ibid.,* pp. 34-35.
50 *Ibid.,* p. 35.

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statements of J.N. Sarkar about the policy of Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh but Indubhusan Banerjee himself contradicts his own statements. For example, in one place Indubhusan Banerjee says that the new policy of Guru Hargobind was "a clever and well-conceived part he had been playing in exceptionally difficult circumstances."[51] In the appreciation of this new policy of militarism, he further writes "It seems to us that Hargobind's acceptance of office under Jahangir was a fine stroke of policy as it greatly disarmed the suspicions of the local authorities. His connection with the government served him as a cloak and he succeeded in maturing his plans without any interference from the authorities."[52] He also uses the statement of Trumpp in his support. After this appreciation, Indubhusan Banerjee suddenly concludes the Guru's career in these words. "when the Guru's career is reviewed as a whole one might say that the new policy, after all, did not serve him well. In spite of his alleged victories he was driven from Pillar to post till at last he was compelled to seek refuge in the hills."[53] Thus, Indubhusan Banerjee is himself confused. He could understand neither Guru Hargobind's policy nor his mission. Guru Hargobind was a Guru, a spiritual leader. The Guru is above of all worldly attachments. He was a teacher of mankind. His mission was for whole of the world. He is beyond the

51 *Ibid.,* pp. 31-32.
52 *Ibid.,* p. 32.
53 *Ibid.* p. 33.

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boundaries of statehood. Therefore, the guru could neither accept the office of the government nor fought for acquiring land or money. The Guru fought for self-defence and for justice. His followers were the devoted Sikhs and not the bad elements of the society. Indubhusan Banerjee failed to assess the mission and achievements of Guru Hargobind and this chapter is the weakest of the *Evolution of the Khalsa.* In the words of J.S. Grewal "Banerjee's contention that Guru Hargobind accepted some kind of service with the Mughal is no longer convincing. He has been corrected in detail."[54]

Moderation was the chief characteristic of the policy pursued by Guru Hargobind's two successors, Guru Har Rai and Guru Har Krishan. The former, indeed, maintained a small army and a court displaying "the pomp and circumstances of a semi-independent military chieftain"; but he avoided open conflict with the Mughal State. Indubhusan Banerjee is of the opinion that history, however repeated itself; he implicated himself in the war of succession on the side of Prince Dara and, like his great-grandfather Guru Arjan, exposed himself to punishment for "treason". For Indubhusan Banerjee Aurangzeb appears far more intolerant then Jahangir, he seems to have considered it politically unwise to antagonise the Sikhs immediately after his accession.

54 J.S.Grewal's article 'Evolution of The Khalsa' in Fauja Singh (ed.),*Historians And Historiography of The Sikhs,* p. 262.

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He tried to win over the Guru's eldest son, Ram Rai who was virtually a hostage in the Mughal Court. Ram Rai offended his father by his anxiety to please the Emperor. He was disinherited. His younger brother, Har Krishan, succeeded to the Gurushipwhen he was barely six years old. He was summoned to Delhi where he died prematurely after three years of formal Guruship.[55]

The uneasy truce between the *Panth* and the Empire came to an end with the Aurangzeb's cruel blow, viz., the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur. There were two contradictory versions of the ninth Guru's character-Sikh and Muslim-which Professor Indubhusan Banerjee analyses with remarkable objectivity. He comes to the conclusion that it was religious bigotry rather than political necessity which lay behind Aurangzeb's policy.

The thirty years (1644-1674) following the death of Guru Hargobind present to Indubhusan Banerjee a spectacle of disintegration at once confirmed and redeemed by the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675. external threat or actual interference and internal disunity characterize the history of these thirty years; rival claimants to Gurship, supported by different cliques of *Masands* ranged against one another and not all of them loath to invoke aid from the state, reduced the dignity of the

55 See also A.C. Banerjee's article "Indubhusan Banerjee" in Fauja Singh (ed.), *Ibid.,* pp. 251-52.

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Panth to its lowest level till the tide began to turn in the pontificate of Guru Gobind Singh.[56]

The situation in which the Sikhs now found themselves resembled the crisis which had threatened to overwhelm them after the execution of Guru Arjan. The major part of professor Indubhusan Banerjee's second volume deals with Guru Gobind Singh's remarkable career and achievement. No summary can do justice to the patience, skill and discrimination with which he extracts sober facts from confused and legendary details about his relations with the Mughal Government and the Hill Rajas. Of far greater and more abiding importance is his interpretation of Guru Gobind Singh's reform of Sikh religion and organization. He makes full use of the *Bachitra Natak* and adds an English version of those parts of the work which Macauliffe left untranslated.[57]

Professor Indubhusan Banerjee raises a very important question: did the *Khalsa* arise "logically and naturally out of the foundations laid by Guru Nanak and his immediate successors", or was it "a superimposition which utilised the foundation for an entirely different purpose"? In his view the tenth Guru did not give up the essentials of Guru Nanak's teaching, but "it would be idle to deny that in the Khalsa we breathe a new spirit". He goes back to sociological interpretation of the transformation of Sikhism

56 J.S. Grewal's article "Indubhusan Banerjee's Evolution of the Khalsa" in Fauja Singh (ed.),*Ibid.* p. 261.
57 A.C. Banerjee's article,*Ibid.* p. 252.

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under Guru Hargobind and says that Guru Gobind Singh "united the religious fervour of the Sikh with the warlike temper of the Jat". Taken as a whole, the tenth Guru's reforms reorganized the Sikhs "with in the tightest of limits" and made the community "more sectarian in character". On these grounds Indubhusan Banerjee is inclined to support the view that the free and untrammelled growth of the Sikhs was arrested by the creation of the *Khalsa*. But he recognizes the compulsion of events which led Guru Gobind Singh in that direction. The large-scale entry of the Jats into the Sikh community had affected the peacful character of the brotherhood nourshied by the early Gurus. The second factor was the "hostile environment' which developed in the 17th century. The spiritual cum-temporal leadership which emerged in the days of Guru Arjan, and was inherited by Guru Gobind Singh, could not ignore the realities, internal and external. The latter's constructive genius reinterpreted the teachings of the early Guru in the light of new conditions and "forged a dynamic force which none could henceforward ignore"[58]

Indubhusan Banerjee tells us that "Guru Gobind Singh must be counted among the greatest of Indians of all ages" and challenges Sir Jadunath Sarkar's attempt to "belittle the achievements of the Sikhs". After Guru Gobind Singh's death the

58 *Ibid.* p. 253.

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Sikhs had, as Trumpp says, "no other choice but to conquer or to be conquered". It was not the tenth Guru but the Mughal Emperors who had pushed them into that dangerous position. It was Guru Gobind Singh's great achievement to prepare the Sikhs for the grim struggle which awaited them in the 18th century. Their success in that struggle and the emergence of a Sikh State testify to the fruitful and enduring character of the Guru's work. Indubhusan Banerjee says: "To our mind the Khalsa's greatest contribution to the cause of India the wresting of the Punjab and the adjoining lands up to the frontier from the clutches of the Afghans. It is not improbable that if they had not done so, some of these tracts might have been lost, even geographically, to India as some other tracts had been in the past.[59]

Indubhusan Banerjee throws new light on the mystery of the murder of Guru Gobind Singh. He rejects the tradition that the attack on the Guru was self-invited on the ground that "the Sikhs who regarded the Guru as an instrument of God and sometimes, against the express injunctions of the Guru, even as an incarnation, could hardly reconcile themselves to the fact that Guru Gobind Singh had fallen a victim to the dagger of an assassin." He considers it much more likely that the murderous attack on the Guru was instigated by Wazir Khan of Sarhind who

59 Indubhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of The Khalsa*, Vol. II, p. 161.

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had been unnerved by the Guru's friendly relations with the new emperor, Bahadur Shah.

In the view of Indubhusan Banerjee himself, the best achievement and also contribution of the Khalsa was to serve the cause of the nation by recovering the territories lost to the Afghans. But besides this appreciation of the Khalsa's achievements some statements of Indubhusan Banerjee are not regarded historically correct. While dealing with the subject of the Khalsa it is imperative to take note of the conclusions reached by Indubhusan Banerjee about the Khalsa. Firstly, he is of the opinion that the entry of the *Jats* into Sikhism was one of the main causes which compelled Guru Gobind Singh to create the Khalsa. He says that "by the time Guru Gobind Singh ascended the *gaddi,* new forces were pressing for recognition. Of these the most important was the traditional character of the overwhelming majority of the *Jats,* whose love for freedom and warlike spirit could no longer be denied a place within the system. In support of his view, he uses a well-known saying "Scratch the Sikh and you will find the *Jat".*[60]

Secondly, Indubhusan Banerjee is of the opinion that with the creation of the Khalsa, Militarism was now adopted finally as an article of creed." Thus, "a military commonwealth came into

60 Indubhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of The Khalsa,* Vol. II, Calcutta, 1962, p. 124.

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existence."[61] Thirdly, he concludes that "the Khalsa was a compound of the Sikh and the Jat; the Guru had united the religious favour of the Sikh with the warlike temper of the *Jat".*[62] Fourthly, he is of the firm view that with the creation of the Khalsa, Sikhism became more uncompromising, more sectarian in character. The free and untrammeled growth of the Sikhism was thereby arrested.

There is no hesitation to write that all the above stated four conclusions drawn by Indubhusan Banerjee are not historically true. So far as the first point is concerned, it may be said safely that the Khalsa was created as an organizational system in place of Masand system. This has also been stated by Kavi Sainapat. The account of the Sainapat, a contemporary chronicler of Guru Gobind Singh clearly confirms this view.[63] Fauja Singh also supports this view when he writes that "the creation of the Khalsa was the crowning event of Guru Gobind Singh's life from the stand point of both organization and ideology. Organizationally, it completely eliminated the need of the order of the Masands. The Masand system had become corrupt, decrepit and creaky, and needed to be replaced immediately by a better system."[64]

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61 *Ibid.*, p. 118.
62 *Ibid.,* p. 125.
63 See *Sri Guru Sobha* (ed. by Ganda Singh), Punjabi University, Patiala, 1967, Chapter 5th.
64 . See also Fauja Singh's article, 'Development of Sikhism under The Sikh Gurus in *Sikhism,* Punjabi University, 1969, p. 31.

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Therefore, the Khalsa was created not to give certain place and position to the *Jats* in the Sikh society or under any compulsion of the *Jat* community. The *Jats* were not the dominant factor to press the Guru. If it were true, all the five-beloved-ones must have been from the *jats* or there must have been their majority atleast among these five. But there was nothing like that. Only one of the five-beloved-ones belonged to the *Jat* community and he was also not from Punjab. He belonged to the region of Delhi and Saharnpur in U.P. Guru Gobind Singh also nominated a non-*Jat* Banda Singh Bahadur as his temporal successor. Banda Singh Bahadur not only led the Khalsa successfully in the battle field but also established the rule of the Khalsa in the very heartland of the *Jats*. If the *Jats* were the dominant factor in shaping the policies of Guru Gobind Singh or if a certain place was to be given to the *Jats* in the Sikh Society then the *Jats* must have dominated in the leadership of the Khalsa commonwealth. Besides the *Jats,* there were also the other communities in Sikhism. Most of these communities belonged to the lower strata of Indian society. After the creation the Khalsa, they became part of the Khalsa commonwealth which was based upon the concept of liberty, equality and fraternity.

The second point of Indubhusan Banerjee that the militarism was adopted finally as an article of creed and thus a military

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Commonwealth came into existence, is also not historically true. The Khalsa was neither an army of Guru Gobind Singh nor it was a military Commonwealth. The *Kirpan* (sword) was one item of the five Ks made compulsory for the Khalsa and it was totally for self-defence. To keep a weapon purely for self-defence cannot be called militarism or military Commonwealth, as Indubhusan Banerjee opines. Instead it should be called a commonwealth of self-determined and self-confident saint- soldiers.

Thirdly, the Khalsa was not a compound of a Sikh and a warlike *Jat*. As has already been said that there were not only the *Jats* in the Khalsa Commonwealth but it consisted of other communities also. There were *Khatris*, confectioners, *mazhbis*, *Ravidasias*, water fetchers, tailors, barbers, shopkeepers etc. in the Khalsa Brotherhood. Were these people also a compound of a Sikh and a *Jat?* Were the four non-Jat members of five-beloved-ones compound of a Sikh and a Jat? So Indubhusan Banerjee is totally wrong when he writes that the Khalsa was a compound of the Sikh and a *Jat*. In fact, the Khalsa was a compound of a saint and a soldier. The Sikh was merely a saint before the creation of the Khalsa. When he was converted into the Khalsa, the soldierly qualities were added into his sainthood. In this way, a combination of saint-soldier came into existence. Ideologically, the creation of the Khalsa aimed at a well balanced combination of the

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ideals of *Bhagti* and *Shakti,* of moral and spiritual excellence and martial valour or heroism of the highest order.[65]

Fourthly, Sikhism did not become more sectarian and more uncompromising in character after the creation of the Khalsa as Indubhusan Banerjee concludes. In fact, by creating the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh infused the national consciousness and national feelings into the Khalsa Brotherhood. That is why, the Khalsa waged a war not against any sect or community but against the tyranny and injustice done by the rulers. Guru Gobind Singh wanted his Khalsa to move in the world without compromising with any kind of subordination. That is why, the Khalsa came into conflict with the state of Kehlur. The Khalsa protected not only itself but the Hindus and Muslims too. The Khalsa did not fight any communal war but it waged a national war to liberate the country. Firstly, it waged a war against the tyrannical Mughal Government under the leadership of Banda Singh Bahadur and established its sovereignty in the Punjab. Ahmad Shah Abdali attacked India and the Khalsa fought with him relentlessly. Ultimately the Khalsa established an independent State in which all the communities shared the power. So, in contradiction to Indubhusan Banerjee's conclusion, Sikhism became more national and more compromising in the

65 *Ibid.,* p. 32

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national arena of freedom struggle. Its followers were inspired to wage a continuous struggle against the tyranny and injustice.

In fact, Indubhusan Banerjee is very much biased about the Jat community even without having proper knowledge about these people. Indubhusan Banerjee himself expresses his ignorance in these words "we must confess that we do not definitely know. The question of the origin of the Jats... has long engaged the attention of eminent scholars but the results hitherto achieved have not been conclusive."[66] These conclusions are, howevers, highly problematical."[67] Inspite of this ignorance Indubhusan Banerjee writes assertively about the Jat character and nature. He writes, "The Jats were habitual plunderers. Indeed all competent authorities are agreed that one of the fundamental traits in the Jat character has been the marauding instinct, and it is significant that the proverbial wisdom of the villages describe a Jat thus: "He is your friend only so long as you have a stick in your hand. If he runs amock it takes God to hold him." He goes on writing "A Jat, a Bhat, a caterpillar, and a widow woman - these four are best hungry. If they eat their fill they do harm. The Jat like a wound, is better kept when bounded and so on."[68] These statements given by Indubhusan Banerjee show his hateredness about the Jats. These statements are not the conclusions of

66 Indubhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of The Khalsa.,*vol.II p. 35.
67 *Ibid.,* p. 36
68 *Ibid.,* pp 41-42.

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history rather these are the street gossips which do not behove a scholar like Indubhusan Banerjee's stature. Indubhusan Banerjee stands among the national historians so he should have ignored such these gossip, like remarks. These unhistorical remarks minimize the historical importance of Indubhusan Banerjee's work.

Besides these street-gossips Indubhusan Banerjee's statements about the Jats show his sectarian view also. He is biased against the muslim and Sikh Jats and appreciates the Hindu Jats. He condemns the activities of the north-western Jats when they attacked Sultan Mahmud Gaznvi's forces, Muhammad-Bin-Tughlag's and Babar's forces[69] but appreciates the attacks of Hindu Jats of Mathura when they broke out in open revolt in 1669 under the leadership of Gokla, the Zamindar of Tilpat. Indubhusan Banerjee characterizes the activities of the muslim Jats with the adjectives of 'habitual plunderers', and the activities of Hindu Jats of Mathura with this statement, "It is clear that a people who, with no discipline and no resources, could keep at by the organised forces of a mighty empire for about a year possessed military qualities of no mean order."[70] Very interestingly, Indubhusan Banerjee characterised the open revolt of the Sikh Jats under the leadership of Nawab Kapur Singh in 1734 against

69 *Ibid.,* pp. 40-41.
70 *Ibid.,* p. 43

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the Mughal Tyranny as “a systematic compaign of plunder and rapine”[71] Basing his statement on the authority of J.N. Sarkar, Indubhusan Banerjee writes that “In the darkest days of Guru Gobind Singh’s life his followers (Jat Sikhs) became plunderers.” He confirmed this illogical statement with his assertiveness in these words,” This was nothing new; the Sikhs were merely following the traditional tactics of the race (Jat) which they mostly belonged.”[72]

As a matter of fact, some European writers wrote about the Jats in a very appreciative language. For example William Irvine to whose work Indubhusan Banerjee himself describes as "invaluable because of his reference to the contemporary Persian chroniclers," writes “These Jats form the great agriculture population of North Western India... These Jats whether Sikhs or not, have a very distinct character of their own. Sturdy, Industrious, quarrelsome, penurious they form the backbone of the agriculture community through out the above extensive region. They are marked off from the Rajput and the Brahman by the widow marriage... In the government of their villages they appear much more democratic than the Rajputs; they have less reverence for hereditary right, and a preference for elected headman.” [73]

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71 *Ibid.* p. 44
72 *Ibid.*
73 Willam Irvine, *The Later Mughals,* Vol. 1, pp. 82-83.

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Similarly, H.A. Rose in his *Glossary* writes about the Jats in a very appreciative language. According to him, "The Jats of the Sikh tract are the typical Jats of the Punjab, including all those great Sikh Jat tribes who have made to race so renowned in recent history. They occupy the central districts of the Punjab, the upper Sutlej and the great Sikh States of the eastern plains. All that has been said regarding the absence of any wish on the part of the Jats of the Khalsa to be ought but Jats, applies here with still greater force... These men (Jats) are the backbone of the Punjab by character and physique as well as by locality. They are stalwart, sturdy yeomen of great independence, industry and agricultural skill, and collectively form perhaps the finest peasantry in India. The Jats of the Sikh tract are essentially husbandmen and the standard of agricultural practice among those at any rate of the more fertile northern districts is as high as is reached in any portion of the province."[74]

Due to these unhistorical and biased remarks, Indubhusan Banerjee's one time greatest work on the Sikhs, is being ousted by the modern research in Sikh history. Besides, the new materials have come to light and new trends of view have emerged. History, both as a form of knowledge and development, is progressive. The search for truth continues. There is no finality in regenerating of

74 H.A. Rose, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province* (1883), Patiala, 1970 (reprint), pp. 12-13.

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historical facts or in interpretation of historical developments. The Sikh scholars are getting awareness to write their own history in a proper historical view.

In the words of J.S. Grewal, Indubhusan Banerjee's work is assessed in a best way. According to him "He is on the way to be ousted from the respectable position he has occupied in the field of Sikh studies, partly due to the limitations of conceptualization and partly due to the limitations of his source materials. It must be emphasized, however, that some of his ideas and hypotheses are being incorporated into the work of his successors in a more or less sophisticated form, just as Indubhusan Banerjee himself adapted and elaborated the ideas, first presented by J.D. Cunninghan."[75] No doubt Indubhusan Banerjee's work on Sikh history was the first of its kind in which the history of the Sikhs was described from a national point of view. It was acceptable to both Hindus and the Sikhs. In this way, Indubhusan Banerjee occupies on eminent position among the historians on the Sikhs. But one time a good historian is now "On the way out. It is not because he is not a good historian; it is only because even the best of historians are eventually dated."[76] History, both as a form of knowledge and development, is progressive. Being dated in due course is no dishonour to a good historian.

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75 J.S. Grewal's article,' Indubhusan Banerjee's Evolution of The Khalsa' in Fauja Singh(ed.), Historians And Historiography on The Sikhs, p. 263.

76 *Ibid,* p. 263.

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N.K. SINHA'S INTERPRETATION OF SIKH HISTORY

In the thirties of the twentieth century, there was a revolutionary trend in Sikh historiography. This trend was brought up by the Bengali historians. The Punjab and Bangal were in the close collaborations in the era of revolutionary movement. There came the revolution on the land of the Punjab during the 18th century by which the Sikhs with the support of the masses, destroyed the Mughal and Afghan governments and established their own rule. That is why the Bangali historians were attracted towards writing the Sikh history. These historians were Indubhusan Banerjee, N.K. Sinha and A.C. Banerjee. Truly speaking, from the academic view-point, the Sikh history was began to write only by these very historians. With their writings, the Sikh history, for the very first time, was included in the post-graduation syllabus of Calcutta university. After Indubhusan Banerjee, N.K. Sinha was the first Bangali historian who attempted to write on the Sikhs. He started his work where Indubhusan Banerjee left. Indubhusan Banerjee wrote on the Guru period of the Sikh history from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. He does not touch the period of Banda Singh Bahadur. N.K. Sinha also does not touch this period. He started to write on Sikh history from the post Banda Singh Bahadur period.

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He has two prestigious publications to his credit which covers the history of the Sikhs from 1716 to 1839. The first book was titled *Rise of The Sikh Power*, which was first published in 1936 and covers the period of eighteenth century Sikh struggle for sovereignty. The second was titled *Ranjit Singh* which covers the life and achievements of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Though N.K. Sinha first published *Ranjit Singh* in1933 and then got published *Rise of The Sikh Power* in 1936. But it was only after the publication of the *Rise of The Sikh Power* that he felt confident and mature enough which led him to revise his first book *Ranjit Singh*. He himself writes in the preface of second edition of *Ranjit Singh* that he became almost ashamed of his hasty first publication.[1] It was after the publication of the *Rise of The Sikh Power*, he polished and enriched the second edition without making any change in his assessment of Ranjit Singh.

Before N.K. Sinha, the history of eighteenth century Sikh struggle was written by Cunningham[2], S.M. Latif[3], Gokul Chand Narang[4] and Khazan Singh[5] but these accounts were too short to satisfy the scholars. A great admirer of Cunningham and

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1 N.K. Sinha, *Ranjit Singh*, Calcutta, 1951(preface to the second edition).
2 J.D. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs From The Origin of The Nation to The Battles of The Sutlej* (1849), New Delhi, 1985 (reprints).
3 S.M. Latif, *History of The Panjab* (1891), Eurasia Publication House, New Delhi,1964(reprint).
4 Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism* (1912, Nisbat Road, Lahore), New Delhi, 1989(reprints).
5 Khazan Singh, *History of The Sikh Religion* (1914), Language Department, Punjab, Patiala, 1988 (reprints).

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Jadunath Sarkar the Author was well aware of these historians limitations, tasks and subjectivity which is evident from his remark, "Historical judgments will always be influenced by values to which different minds will attach a different qualitative scale."[6] After going through the existing accounts of the movement by these historians, Sinha felt the need to illuminate the obscure corners of Indian history.

The list of Primary sources in Persian language, given by the author in the bibliography with explanatory notes show explicitly, that the author was well known about these sources and he used these accounts in his book for its well drawn conclusion. The author was also well aware of Punjabi sources especially Giani Gian Singh's *Panth Parkash* in whose appreciation he used Malcolm's lines in which the importance of the local sources is given. According to him, "In every research into the general history of mankind, it is of the essential importance to hear what the nation has to say of itself."[7] So, it is pertinent to go through the Punjabi sources for the study of eighteenth century Sikh history from a Sikh point of view. Therefore, equipped with the knowledge of Persian, Punjabi and English sources the author attempted to write the 18th century Sikh history. It was the period of the rise of the Sikh power in the Punjab. The Sikh and Maratha struggles for

6 N.K. Sinha, *Rise of The Sikh Power*, Calcutta, 1960, Preface to second edition.
7 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

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independence, in the opinion of the author, were remarkable and decisive in character, which were launched by two persons, namely, Guru Gobind Singh and Shivaji against the Mughals. The former was the father of Sikh militarism and a great awakener of consciousness. Unlike any military dictator, Guru Gobind Singh believed in the collective wisdom of the community; therefore he imparted a new spirit, a new vision and new bonds of unity by granting his followers "new name, new dress, new equipment and new ceremonies."[8] He converted the Sikhs into a religious minded, war-like fraternity, intensely conscious of itself.[9] Such a community confronted with life and death struggle emerged triumphantly from the horrible and trembling situation.

In the *Rise of The Sikh Power*, N.K. Sinha attempts to delineate the history of the Sikhs from 1716 to 1799. It covers 136 pages in eight chapters. The book is dedicated to Joseph Davey Cunningham "The conscientious and faithful Historian whose *History of The Sikhs*, first published in 1849, still remains a source of inspiration." During the eighteenth century, the Sikh history saw its ups and downs so many times but the Sikh power was going to increase through every horrible situation. Therefore, the author entitled his book *Rise of The Sikh Power*. It is the story of the rising of the Sikhs in the land of the five rivers, on the ruins

8 *Ibid.,* pp.1 and 107.
9 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

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of the Mughals and the Afghans. From the analysis of this Sikh struggle for sovereignty, mainly three stages emerge distinctly. The first from 1716 to 1753. During this period, the Sikhs struggled for survival. The role of the Sikhs was mainly defensive. Abdus Samad Khan, Zakariya Khan, Yahiya Khan, Shah Niwaz Khan and Mir Mannu were the Mughal governors of Lahore during this period. The Mughal government made an all-out effort to stamp out the Sikhs which at times received staggering blows, horrible persecutions and martyrdoms of the Sikhs.[10] The second stage was from 1753 to 1761. During this period, Ahmad Shah Abdali fought against the Mughals and the Marathas and eliminated them. This Abdali-Mughal-Maratha struggle and the elimination of the Mughals and the Marathas from the scene of Northern India, provided opportunities to the Sikhs to recoup and reorganize themselves for the bid for power. Dal Khalsa was organized and the regular struggle was waged by the Sikhs. The Sikhs moved into the Afghan governed Punjab and thus, they were engaged directly with the Afghans to be the supreme power. The third stage was from 1761 to 1765-66. During this stage there were only two contestants in the arena of the Punjab. These two were the Afghans and the Sikhs. This Afghan-Sikh contest was decisive and the Sikhs emerged victorious ultimately. Ahmad Shah Abdali

10 See also Bhagat Singh, *A History of The Sikh Misals*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1993, p. 54.

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failed to put down the Sikhs because they refused to meet him on his terms. "They were everywhere and yet elusive; they displayed temerity in attacking armies much stronger than their and alacrity in running away when the tide of battle turned against them.

N.K. Sinha deals this account of the Sikhs in his *Rise of The Sikh Power*. He starts the book with these remarks "The history of India in the eighteenth century is mainly a record of anarchy and confusion, selfishness, cowardice and treachery, unpatriotic, betrayals and horrible reigns of terror, the tyranny of the strong, the agony of the weak and the futility of isolated attempts. The depth of this gloom is, however, relieved the story of the rise of Sikh political power, as a result of the collective endeavour of a united people."[11] This successful 'endeavour of a united people' inspired the author to write this book.

During the twenties and thirties of the twentieth century, the national movement was on its peak in India. The author was very much influenced by the national political atmosphere. This gave a mould to his mind and set of values which in turn determined his historians perception. Thus, inspired by the freedom struggle of the early twentieth century, N.K. Sinha views the Sikh struggle for sovereignty during eighteenth century as a national struggle for Indian independence. The concluding lines,

11 N.K. Sniha, *Rise of The Sikh Power*, Calcutta,1960, p. 1.

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given by the author in the end of his book aptly justify the author's nationalistic views. He uses Keene's quotation to justify the Sikh success for eliminating the alien powers in the North-western India. Keene puts it very aptly, "A few incursions, each less successful than its predecessor; the famous Khalsa was to settle down, like a wall of concrete, a dam against the encroachments of the northern flood. What was almost equally important, the establishment of the power of the Sikhs in Punjab put an end to the peaceful immigration of adventurers from Persia and Turkestan, which had furnished the Mughal empire with great philosophers, beautiful princesses, brave generals and able politicians and statesmen."[12]

These two statements of the author, used one in the beginning and the other in the end are, in fact, conclusive. The condition of India, under the Mughal empire, during the eighteenth century was hopelessly, destabilized but this destabilization was over when the Sikhs established their rule and for the first time in the history of India the flood of the Persian and Afghan invaders was not only stopped but the Sikhs also became the king makers of Afghanistan. N.K. Sinha, from the core of his heart pay the tribute to the Sikh leadership by writing this book.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 119.

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The Sikhs came out victorious from their struggle. They established their authority in the Punjab, issued coins and appointed their officers. While analyzing the causes of Sikh success in this struggle, N.K. Sinha is of the firm view that the foreign invaders played very important part in the rising of Sikh power. Thus, he regards the invasions of Nadir Shah in 1739 and then Ahmad Shah Abdali between the period 1748-1767 responsible for the Sikh success.

As a matter of fact, Nadir's invasion truely weakened the Mughal royalty but not the power of Zakariya khan of Lahore. In fact, Nadir himself appointed Zakariya Khan as a governor of Lahore and cautioned him from the danger of the Sikhs and to face it successfully he also empowered him. As a result, Zakariya Khan being representative of Nadir Shah was absolutely free from the Mughal royal control. He, therefore, applied all his intentions to suppress the Sikhs. "The previous orders to local officials were repeated with a greater emphasis and rewards were offered for the capture and destruction of the Sikhs.... The whole machinery of the government, including *chaudhries*, *Muqaddams* etc., was put into motion to crush the Sikhs."[13] Zakariya Khan was free from all sides to pursue his policies against the Sikhs. In fact, he became more powerful with the blessings of Nadir Shah.

13 Teja Singh Ganda Singh, *A Short History of The Sikhs*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1999 (reprint), p. 121.

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After the invasion of Nadir Shah, another invader invaded India for so many times. This invader was Ahmad Shah Abdali who was previously, the prominent general of Nadir Shah. Therefore, after the death of Nadir Shah, he became the leader of the Afghans and thus, occupied Kabul and Kandhar. This Afghan continued the work that Nadir had begun. Ahmad Shah Abdali took up the work because he was much closer neighbour of India than Nadir Shah. Therefore, his invasions are more intimately a part of the history of the India than that of Nadir Shah.

Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India effectively for seven times and during these invasions, he destroyed the Mughal and Maratha power completely. Because of the elimination of the Mughals within the Punjab region the Sikhs were helped automatically. N.K. Sinha writes that, "the Sikhs alone were left to fight the issue out with the Durranis, the other two contestants having dropped out."[14] Such a community confronted with life and death struggle emerged triumphantly from the ordeal. While analyzing the reasons for their success, besides the spirit and idealism of the Sikhs, Sinha attaches great importance to Abdali's invasions. He writes, "The actual result of Abdali's invasions in Afghanistan are not so easily ascertainable but, in the Punjab at least, he was indirectly largely responsible for the ultimate

14 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

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success of the Sikhs and his career in India is intimately a part of the Sikh struggle for independence."[15]

It is to be noted that the Sikhs did not wrest the sovereignty from the Mughals, instead they wrest the sovereignty from the hands of Ahmad Shah Abdali and his successors. No doubt, Abdali eliminated the Mughals from the Punjab and this elimination, to some extent, paved the way for the Sikh success but after the elimination of the Mughal power, Abdali himself assumed the control of the administration of the Punjab. He appointed his son Timur Shah, a viceroy of Lahore and all of the other territories which were ceded to him, with Jahan khan, the able general, as his wazir.[16] Therefore, from 1756 upto 1765-66, the Punjab was under the direct control of Ahmad shah Abdali. The Sikhs assumed sovereignty in the Punjab by defeating Abdali and his Afghan forces. Thus, N.K. Sinha is not right in writing that Abdali's invasions helped the Sikhs to achieve the sovereignty in the Punjab. Infact, Abdali tried his best to crush the Sikhs. During the second holocaust in February, 1762 nearly 30,000 Sikhs were killed. In spite of this stumbling blow, the Sikhs could not be subdued. Instead, the Sikhs defeated Abdali in the coming battles. Indubhusan Banerjee is also of the view that "It was not

15 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
16 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

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from the heirs of Aurangzib but from the Afghan inheritors of Nadir Shah that the Sikhs conquered the Punjab."[17]

The Sikhs, first struggled with the Mughals. It is true to some extent that when Abdali attacked on the Mughal empire, the Sikhs got the opportunity to extend their area of influence. Destabilization of the tottering Mughal administrative structure at the centre and in the province of the Punjab by Abdali created opportunities for the Sikhs to establish their own rule. The clever strategy of employing guerilla warfare against their enemies succeeded. When the Mughals were ousted, Abdali himself assumed the administration of the Punjab in his own hand, as has already been stated. The Sikhs, therefore, wrested the Punjab from the hands of the Afghans and not from the hands of the Mughals or the Marathas. The Sikhs, thus, emerged victorious after a long drawn and fateful struggle.

This Sikh success from a long drawn and fateful struggle astonished the historians of Sikh history. Hari Ram Gupta terms this success as a 'miracle'. "Readers ! Have we not witnessed a miracle? And yet people say the age of miracles has passed."[18] N.K. Sinha has rightly remarked that "for the successful termination of the Sikh war of independence we should give the

17 Indubhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of The Khalsa*, vol. II, Calcutta, 1962, p.155.
18 Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, vol. II, p. 260.

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credit to the entire nation, not to any individual. That would be against the spirit of the whole enterprise,"[19]

Besides paying rich tribute to the entire nation for its 'successful termination of its war of independence', the author also pays his tributes to its successful leadership given by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. He says that "But an exception must be made in the favour of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. To a large extents, he was the soul of many of those apparently isolated undertakings that ultimately brought the war of liberation to a successful termination." He defeated Jahan Khan and the other Afghan generals. "His ascendancy was precisely that which superior minds acquire in times of difficulty." He was simple and soft-spoken. "He was more than anything else a religious man and the greatest Sikh chieftains like Amar Singh of Patiala would consider it an honour to be initiated by him." He had no ill-will in his mind for his colleagues. "What further raised him above other, was the utter absence of jealousy in his mind. He was a whole-souled patriot and yet for the sake of unity he would at times tolerate the lapses of others.... His career a romantic alternation of victories and escapes, his courage and patriotism a theme of admiration and emulation, his moral qualities and most conspicuously his piety a support and consolation ever in the darkest hour."[20]

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19 N.K. Sinha, *Rise of the Sikh Power*, Calcutta, 1960, p. 51.
20 *Ibid.*, p. 52-53.

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So far the governing system of the Sikhs are concerned, it will be too much to expect any concrete form of government from the Sikh Misaldars immediately after their assuming administrative control. They had passed through a life of stress and strain for half a century. The form of the government, introduced by the Misaldars has received different interpretations at different hands. In the words of Cunningham, the organization of the community of faith or object was their moving principle, and war like array, the devotion to the steel of Gobind, was their material instrument."[21] Cunningham continues his argument that the Misal organization or the administration was "a theocratic confederate feudalism." He justifies it that it was confederate because "year by year the Sarbat Khalsa or the whole Sikh people met once at Amritsar..... It was perhaps hoped that the performance of religious duties and the awe inspired by so holy a place might cause selfishness to yield to regard for the general welfare..... They sought wisdom and unanimity of counsel from their teacher and the book of his word."[22] He further writes that it was feudalism because "the federate chiefs partitioned their joint conquests equally among themselves and divided their respective shares in the same manners among their own leaders of bands

21 *A History of The Sikhs*, New Delhi, 1985, p. 94.
22 *Ibid.*

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while these again subdivided their portions among their own dependents agreeably to the general custom of sub-infeduation."[23]

At the same time, cunningham says that this system existed "with all the confusion and uncertainty attendant upon a triple alliance of the kind in society half-barbarous" and further "this positive or understood rule was not always applicable to this actual conditions..... In theory such men (the Sikhs) were neither the subjects nor the retainers of any feudal chiefs and they could transfer services to whom they pleased or they could themselves become leaders and acquire new lands for their own use in the name of the Khalsa or Commonwealth."[24] The literally meaning of theocracy is, "that constitution of a state in which God or God is regarded as the sole sovereign and the laws of the realm as divine commands rather than human ordinances, the priesthood necessarily becoming the officers of invisible ruler."[25] The state thus governed is a theocratic state.

Malcolm for example, attributed the institution of *gurmata* to Guru Gobind Singh himself and regarded 'the spirit of equality' as the vital principal of the Sikh Commonwealth.[26] H.H. Wilson thought of the eighteenth century Sikh polity as 'a sort of

23 *Ibid.*, p. 95.
24 *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.
25 E.M. Kirpatrick (ed.), *Chambers 20th Century Dictionary*, New Delhi, 1985, p. 1340.
26 Malcom, *Sketch of the Sikhs*(1812), reprint, Chandigarh, 1981, p. 145.

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theocracy."[27] Lepel Griffin saw an intimate connection between Sikh polity and 'the democratic nature' of Sikhism.[28] A.C. Banerjee looks upon the Sikh community as being governed by principles of 'equality and democracy' and for him eighteenth century Sikh polity was 'a confederacy which was democratic in composition and religious in its cohesive principle."[29] Sinha terms it as 'Aristocratic in its actual form but a democratic in its spirit. He writes assertively that "a real democratic element was there in the constitution. In its actual working it was undoubtedly a democracy."[30] Though he sees in this system, "an element of theocracy, along with a strong sense of brotherhood."[31]

The rule which was established by the Sikhs was divided among the twelve Misaldars. Slowly and steadily, these Misaldars became stronger, their territories were extended, strong forts were built, their fighting strength increased and ultimately they emerged as twelve very powerful chiefs of the Sikh empire. This state of affairs resembled with the feudalism of Europe. But the author has drawn up a sharp contrast between the Sikh feudalism and the feudalism of the medieval Europe and that of Rajputana. He observes that the feudalism of the Sikhs almost totally

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27 H.H. Wilson, *'Civil And Religious Institutions of The Sikhs'* in *The Sikh Religion A Symposium*, Calcutta, 1958, p. 61.
28 Lepel Griffin, *Ranjit Singh* (Rulers of India Series),Oxford, 1905, chapter III.
29 A.C. Banerjee, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, Calcutta, 1949, pp. ixv and ixvii (introduction).
30 N.K. Sinha, *Rise of The Sikh Power*, p. 110.
31 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

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different not only from the feudalism in Europe, in medieval times, but also from the feudalism that obtained in Rajputana, very close to the homeland of the Sikhs. The Misals were the confederacies of equals and they kept in view the reciprocal benefits or the well being of their Misals. At no stage of Sikh history do we find a haughty nobility as in Rajputana or in Medieval Europe. In Rajputana, the chiefs were divided into very clear grades, and similarly there was graded society in medieval Europe. In Rajputana, there was a patriarchal element, prominently visible, a large number of vassal chiefs claimed blood affinity to the ruler. But in the Sikh Misaldari system we find no such patriarchal element and also there was no obligation of military service. The Sikh system was certainly not feudal in the European sense. The all pervading sense of brotherhood and a religious outlook would not at least in theory, allow distinctions of rank.[32]

N.K. Sinha is of the view that during the Misal period, the central government of the Sikhs, consisted of the '*Sarbat Khalsa*' to which the author terms as "tumultuous body". It met twice a year at Amritsar on the festivals of *Baisakhi* and *Diwali*. It consulted the Sikh affairs of every kind. The confederacy was called Khalsa ji and the grand army was called Dal Khalsa ji. The author opines that "to the superficial observer, the constitution

32 *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111.

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was an aristocracy" but he does not agree with this term given by the European writers and himself terms it as 'Theocratic confederate feudalism' as Cunningham has written and the author draws his couslusion on the authority of Cunningham. The author asserts that the "feudalism everywhere makes for chaos and anarchy and Sikh history is no exception." Therefore, in the struggle for supremacy among the Misaldars, this "Theocratic confederate feudalism gave place to a military monarchy" of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.[33]

The sovereignty is allied with the coins. Therefore, when the Sikhs established their sovereignty in the Punjab they also issued their coins in 1765. N.K. Sinha is of the opinion that "In those days no assertion of authority could be held as valid unless it was accompanied by an issue of coins."[34] The author is also aware of the spurious coins stuck by the Qazis and Mullahs to incite Ahmad Shah Abdali against the Sikhs in 1764[35]. This coin was stuck in the personal name of Jassa Singh as Jass Kalal. The author terms it "highly absurd and absolutely unlikely. The Sikh commonwealth really stuck coins for the first time in 1765 with the inscription:

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33 *Ibid*., p. 117.

34 *Ibid*., p. 54.

35 See also Hari Ram Gupta, *History of The Sikhs*, vol. II(*Evolution of Sikh Confederacies:*1708-1769), New Delhi, 1978, pp. 174-78; J.S. Grewal, *Sikh Ideology, Polity And Social Order*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1996, p. 100; and Bhagt Singh, *A History of The Sikh Misals*, 1993, p. 410.

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Degh o Tegh o Fateh o Nussat-i-bedrang.

Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.

The author writes conclusively that "Sikh sway was thus firmly established in the Punjab as the uninterrupted issue of their coins indicates. Between 1767 and 1773 the Sikhs practically extended their power from Saharanpur in the east to Attock in the west, from Multan in the south to Kangra and Jammu in the north."[36]

Being a nationalist, N.K. Sinha admires the Sikh success in the long and fateful struggle and the spirit of democracy of the Sikhs. He also warns that the phrase "theocratic confederate feudalism" should not be misunderstood. The Sikh feudalism was entirely different from the medieval European feudalism in spirit and form. Besides all these praises and administrations, the author regrets on this point that the system, established by the Misals had decayed in the Punjab by 1768 because "in its very success were concealed the germs of dissolution. What might have been the most novel experiment in statecraft degenerated later, in the nineteenth century, into a military monarchy."[37] The military monarchy was established by Ranjit Singh and "Ranjit Singh absorbed most of the Trans-Sutlej misals or made them dependent on himself and it was his rise that gave the Sikhs half a

36 N.K. Sinha, *op.cit.*, p.
37 *Ibid.*, pp. 2 and 117.

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century more of glorious political life until the collapse of their power at Sabraon." But inspite of all this, the author does not blame the Misal system. "This does not mean either that the Misal constitution was hopelessly bad all through or that in India all experiments in democracy ultimately lead to monarchy. All these constitutional changes teach us."[38]

II

N.K. Sinha ended his first book *Rise of The Sikh Power* when Ranjit Singh was in his ascendancy. The author was full of praise of the successful termination of the Sikhs. He writes that "the Dal Khalsa and its heroes should not receive a sneer from us merely because they plundered. They also fought most effectively and were largely responsible for stemming the tide of Durrani invasions. We must not judge them according to an ideal code of ethics, but by the standard that prevailed in the 18th century."[39] "The Sikh theocratic confederate feudalism", Sinha calls the Misl rule, "had released living forces at one time. It had its triumphs and grand achievements to its credit."[40] But in all political organizations, views Sinha, an element of decay is always at work. Power brings an appetite for more power and in this unmitigated lust for power lies the seed of corruption. The 'theocratic confederate feudalism' was already a decayed institution in 1768

38 *Ibid.*, p. 18.
39 N.K. Sinha, *Rise of The Sikh Power*, Calcutta, 1960, p.119.
40 *Ibid.*, p.118.

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and it went on decaying from day by day.[41] In the mutual struggle for ascendency the Shukerchakia Misl prevailed. As a result, the "theocratic confederate gave place to a military monarchy." Ranjit Singh absorbed most of the Trans-Sutlej Misls or made them dependent on himself, and it was his rise that gave the Sikhs half a century of glorious political life.[42]

Maharaja Ranlit Singh established a monarchy and founded an empire between the expanding British Empire and tottering Afghan rule in the early 19th century. Though illiterate yet he baffled men of his contemporaries in the game of diplomacy and statecraftness. He was the ruler who united the Punjabi people into a nation, for the first time in history. He was revered by his people. Though he was a traditional yet enlightened. He was feared by the Afghans and respected by the Britishers. While writing about such a historical personality, historians contemporary or non-contemporary have expressed their own views. Hindu and Sikh historians regard him as a virtuous man and a selfless patriot. The muslim historians see him as an avaricious free-booter. The Britishers consider him a cunning man devoid of moral considerations. For the academicians he was an astute politician.[43]

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41 *Ibid.*, p.117.
42 *Ibid.*, p. 118.
43 Khushwant Singh, *Ranjit Singh, Maharaja of The Punjab*, London, 1962, pp. 7-8.

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Ranjit Singh's meteoric rise and the sudden collapse of the Sikh rule has tempted many historians to offer some explanation or the other. The purpose of writing this account is the evaluation of Ranjit Singh written by N.K. Sinha. Before him Henery Prnisep,[44] J.D. Cunningham,[45] Griffin,[46] S.M. Latif,[47] Giani Gian Singh,[48] Gokul Chand Narang,[49] Khazan Singh,[50] G.L. Chopra,[51] and Sita Ram Kohli[52] had written about Ranjit Singh in the form of the books or a part of their books. The gist of these historians is that the kingdom of Ranjit Singh "appears as freaks of history instead of as the culmination of an important historical movement."[53] N.K. Sinha designates Ranjit Singh's rule as a military monarchy based on his personal influence. Sinha is a critical of Ranjit Singh's policy which he adopted towards the Britishers. First of all Sinha criticizes Ranjit Singh's attitude towards Jaswant Rao Holkar when he, defeated by the British army, came to Ranjit Singh's territory for help. Sinha writes that "when Holkar asked him for help, the Sukerchukia chief politely

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44 Henery Prinisep, *Origin of The Sikh Power in The Punjab and Political Life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, (1834), reprinted by Languages department Punjab, Patiala, 1970.
45 J.D. Cunningham, *A History of The Sikhs* (1849), reprinted, New Delhi, 1985.
46 Lepel Griffin, *Ranjit Singh*, Clarendan Press, Oxford, 1905.
47 S.M. Latif, *History of The Panjab* (1891),reprinted, New Delhi, 1964.
48 Giani Gian Singh, *Twarikh Raj Khalsa* (Punjabi), Sialkot, 1894.
49 Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism* (1912), Jullundhar, 1960.
50 Khazan Singh, *History of Sikh Religion* (1914), reprinted by languages Department Punjab, Patiala, 1970.
51 G.L. Chopra, *Punjab As a Sovereign State*, Lahore, 1928.
52 Sita Ram Kohli, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh* (1933), reprinted, New Delhi, 1953.
53 Khushwant Sing, *Ranjit Singh, Maharaja of The Punjab,* p. 8.

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asked for his aid against his own enemies in the Punjab. When Lord Lake demanded his active support, suave young diplomat was noncommittal and would only agree to cause Jaswant Rao Holkar to remove with his army to the distance of thirty *Kos* from Amritsar."[54] Sinha justifies Jaswant Rao Holkar's attempts to contact Shah Shuja, king of Kabul, then at Shikarpur because Ranjit Singh's attitude toward Holkar, was not convincing. The author says, "Holkar looked around for aid in view of the provoking silence of the Sikh chief," [55] Ranjit Singh persuaded Holkar and the Britishers to come to friendly terms so that the retreat of Holkar to his own kingdom could be secured. Resultantly, Holkar went back safely to his country. N.K. Sinha ignoring these sincere efforts of Ranjit Singh writes that "British terms were favourable and by the Treaty of Raipur Ghat(on the Bias river) in December 1805, he at last came to an understanding with them."[56] This very treaty was matured only by the sincere efforts of Ranjit Singh and thus he was the "mediator in the Anglo-Maratha dispute."[57]

As a matter of fact, Jaswant Rao Holkar was not sincere towards the population of Punjab and he looted and plundered the

54 N.K. Sinha, *Ranjit Singh*, Calcutta, 1960, p.18.
55 *Ibid.*, p.18.
56 *Ibid.*, p.18.
57 Bikramajit Hassart, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*: 1799-1849, Hoshiarpur, 1968, pp. 52-54. See also Khushwant Singh, *History of The Sikhs*, vol. I; 1469-1838, Oxford, 2004, p. 212.

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inhabitants of Punjab. His routed army ravaged Punjab wherever it went and thus antagonized the local population. His Rohilla ally invited the Afghans to reinvade India. Thus, neither the intentions nor the actions of the Maratha chief were above board. His intrigue at Kabul was fully known to Ranjit Singh."[58] The basics point of Ranjit Singh's non-committal attitude towards Holkar was his weak position in compare to the Britishers. Even Malcolm who was with Lord Lake, writes about the weak military position of Ranjit Singh in these words, "when Holkar fled into Punjab, in 1805 and was pursued by that illustrious British commander, Lord Lake, a complete opportunity was given of observing the actual state of this nation which was found weak and distracted, in a degree that could have been imagined. It was altogether destitute of union.[59] N.K. Sinha should have taken notices of all these aspects of Ranjit Singh's situation and Jaswant Rao Holkar's activities too.

N.K. Sinha is a critic of Ranjit Singh for signing the treaty of Amritsar with the Britishers in 1809. By this treaty, the advancement of Ranjit Singh was checked beyond the South-East of the river Sutlej. Ranjit Singh was compelled to relinquish all his claims on the cis-Sutlej territories. But he was given free hand in

58 Joginder Singh's article 'Managing The Perfidious Neighbour' in Prithipal Singh Kapur Dharam Singh (eds.), *Maharaja Ranjit Singh*; *Commemoration Volume on Bicentenary of His Coronation*; 1801-2001, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2001, pp.178-79.

59 Melcolm, *Sketch of The Sikhs*(1812), reprinted, Chandigarh, 1981, p.84.

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the North-West areas of the river Sutlej. In a way Sutlej river was fixed as the permanent border between the Britishers and Ranjit Singh.The Britishers will have no connection with the rulers of the states in the North-West areas of the Sutlej.

It is right that Ranjit Singh could not unite whole of the Sikh territories under his rule but it is also true that whatever he lost in the cis-Sutlej area he gained many times more in the trans-Sutlej area. In a way he also got the recognition of his rule from the Britishers. Aware of the strength of the British, he deliberately avoided an open clash with the East India Company. Ranjit Singh knew well that any attempt to come into an armed clash with them would ruin his Kingdom. With this thinking, he signed the treaty of Amritsar and it "was amply proof of his political sagacity."[60] But Sinha sees it otherwisely. He is of the opinion that "Ranjit suffered a diplomatic defeat" by signing this treaty "and had to put his pride in his pocket and eat the humble pie."[61] He explains further that "His ignorance of the term of events in Europe brought about this discomfiture." Sinha goes on writing that "we are reminded, as we read this history of his failure, of the truism "If you wish to obtain your objective by force you must be strong, if you want to obtain them by negotiations you must be

60 Madanjit Kaur, *The Regime of Maharaja Ranjit Singh: Historians Observation*, Chandigarh, 2007, p.IIX (Introduction).
61 N.K. Sinha, *Ranjit Singh*,.p. 33.

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strong still."[62] As a matter of fact Ranjit Singh was stronger neither militarily nor diplomatically. He was in the early stage of his career. He knew the limitations of his own power. His kingdom had not yet crossed even its formative stage and it was yet not strong enough to face the mighty British. In the period of a war with the Britishers, there was every possibility that those chiefs who had accepted Ranjit Singh's elegance not long ago might try to shift loyalities and those who had not yet been completely subdued, might also seek protection of the British like the Cis-Sutlej chiefs. In that case whatever little chance of establishing a Sikh kingdom, could still come his way, would pass by him. Therefore he could not dictate his terms to the Britishers. Whatever he achieved by this treaty he could not achieve this even by force. By this treaty he achieved the status of equal power of the British and gained the recognition from the British government. This should be regarded as his achievement.

According to N.K. Sinha, Ranjit Singh had "lost the chance of moulding the Sikh Nation into a well ordered state." His failure "to absorb the cis-Sutlej states was a tragedy of Sikh Militant Nationalism. Marking the disruption of the great creation of Guru Gobind Singh", Sinha writes that "The conflicting claims of Ranjit Singh and the British Government were to cause a split among the

62 *Ibid.*, p.33.

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Sikhs who in theory formed one United People."[63] He concludes that "In a small sphere, Ranjit Singh's role was that of an unsuccessful Bismark and Lincoln in one."[64]

If a responsibility of the failure to unite the whole Sikh people is to be fixed upon anyone then Ranjit Singh could not be ascertained responsible for his failure because almost all of the cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs were against him. They unitedly appealed to the Britishers to provide their protection to them. When all the Sikh chiefs of the cis-Sutlej area were against Ranjit Singh then how could he succeed to bring them under his rule? Therefore, instead of Ranjit Singh, these cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs were responsible for the failure of a united Sikh Kingdom. Ranjit Singh tried his best to impress the British Government to claim that all of the Sikh States of the Punjab should be brought under his Kingdom.

It is to be noted that whatever N.K. Sinha comments against the treaty of Amritsar, he himself contradicts these statements in a way when he comments on the glorious achievements of Ranjit Singh in the North-West regions of the trans-Sutlej. According to Sinha, the treaty provided a great help to Ranjit Singh for he could extend his frontiers in the North-West unheeded by the Britishers. He writes that "after the treaty of Amritsar, he could pursue his

63 *Ibid.*, p.34.
64 *Ibid.*,p.34.

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plans of systematic aggression unhampered by British attempts to undermine his position. Metcalfe had drawn Ranjit Singh's attention to this advantage that he would derive if he yields to British demands."[65] Praising Ranjit Singh's success in the trans-Sutlej area Sinha goes to write, "a dynamic, vigorous personality now begin to shape the history of the Punjab. The diverse groupings and affinities, a feature of misl history, the differences and discords of the princes and princelings, were now replaced by the achievements of one man with determination who observing the power of his associates, displaced from the ruins of their commonwealth the standard of monarchy."[66]

The treaty of 1809 resulted in the conquest and consolidation of Ranjit Singh. Sinha comments that "with the eastward expansion barred by the treaty of Amritsar, the Sikh state now advance only at the expense of the Kabul monarchy that still held Kashmir, Attock, Peshawar, Kohat, Tank, Bannu, Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismil Khan and was even nominally still supreme over Multan and Sindh. Between 1810-24 Ranjit was busy conquering these regions and fighting decisive battles with the Kabul monarchy as also consolidating at the same time his hold over the Punjab."[67] This was the impact of the friendly relations with the Britishers. The determination to consolidate

65 *Ibid.*,p.41.
66 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
67 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

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Ranjit Singh's rule in those strongholds was the result of the treaty of Amritsar to which Sinha terms Ranit Singh's diplomatic defeat. It was not a diplomatic defeat of Ranjit Singh, instead it was a diplomatic sagacity of Ranjit Singh by which he got the permanent security of his South-East border.

N.K. Sinha's predecessor on Ranjit Singh, Principal Sita Ram Kohli writes about the effects of the treaty of Amritsar very accurately. According to him "with the end of this procrastination, Ranjit Singh crossed yet another significant but essential phase of his life. Now, there was no doubt that the Maharaja would not get an opportunity to unify the Khalsa and that he had to remain bereft of about one half of the Sikh possessions, because six of the misls were situated in the cis-Sutlej area and the remaining six were on his side. But all the areas between the river Sutlej and the Indus and beyond came under his sphere of influence and there remain no danger to him from the increasing power of British... However, this treaty presents an excellent example of Ranjit Singh's perception of events that presented themselves before him."[68]

Bikrama jit Hasrat also hailed the sagacity of Ranjit Singh. He writes that "Politically, the treaty proved more advantageous to Ranjit Singh than to the English... The establishment of peace and

68 Sita Ram Kolhi, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh* (Punjabi), Atma Ram and sons, Delhi, 1953, pp. 95-96.

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friendship with the British allowed Ranjit Singh to consolidate his power in the Punjab, evolve a centralized system of government based on military despotism, build up and introduce European discipline into his armies, and pursue unhampered, his conquests to the north of the Indus. The frontier on the Sutlej was a guarantee of peace with the British, it also provided a guarantee of British recognition to the powerful and independent Sikh state, which he had built up."[69]

Besides the treaty of Amritsar in 1809, there were other treaties also which were written between the Maharaja and the British government. These were the Indus Navigation treaty of 1832 and Tripartite treaty of 1838. The first was signed on 26 December, 1832 between the British government and the Maharaja while the second was signed among the Maharaja, Shah Shuja and the Britishers in June, 1838. By the treaty of 1832, a toll was established on the Indus by both of the governments while the Tripartite treaty provided the guarantee of the pertetual security from the King of Kabul and the recognition was also given to those conquered regions of Ranjit Singh which were previously the parts of Afghanistan.

N.K. Sinha sees through these treaties the British domination and the weakness of Ranjit Singh. In these relations,

69 Bikrama Jit Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, pp. 95-96.

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the author passes a severe judgment that "In his relations with British government... Ranjit Singh is a pathetic figure, helpless and inert... He does not show any courage or statesmanship that deserves our applause... he chose an impracticable alternative, that of conciliating an imperial power which could not look with equanimity on the military structure he had raised. Perhaps with the solicitude inherent in all builders he feared to expose the Kingdom he had created to the risks of war and chose instead the policy of yielding, yielding and yielding."[70]

These comments of N.K. Sinha about the yielding nature of Ranjit Singh are not justified in the light of his wonderful achievements in the cis-Indus and trans-Indus region. Perhaps captain Wade's report sent to the Secretary, which is quoted by Sinha too, negates Sinha's comments. According to Wade's report "Ranjit Singh has hitherto derived nothing but advantage from his alliance with us. While we have been engaged in consolidating our power in Hindustan, he has been extending his conquest throughout the Punjab and across Indus... He is now more likely to encourage than withdraw from alliances of which may hold out to him a hope of creating a balance of power."[71]

No doubt, Ranjit Singh made his friendship with the Britishers at the cost of the cis-Sutlej regions but he achieved

70 N.K. Sinha, *Ranjit Singh*, pp. 90-91.
71 *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

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much more in the trans-Sutlej area only due to the friendship of the Britishers. In the absence of the British friendship on the river Sutlej it would have been quite impossible for Ranjit Singh to conquer the Muslim strongholds.

N.K. Sinha has his own views on the administration of Ranjit Singh. These are consistent with his assumptions. The hastily patched up monarchy of Ranjit Singh had 'a government of discretion,' inflicted partially by the abuse of delegated authority and absence of laws and arts. Surprisingly, there were no major conclusions and conflicts. His regime was securer and more peaceful than that of the British. In the words of Sinha, "Life and property were secure. The towns like Lahore and Amritsar had certainly increased in wealth; manufactures and trade were more thriving and the people were not at all over-anxious to migrate to British territories."[72]

Unlike the British historians, Sinha is full of praise for Ranjit Singh's administration, its unique features being the popular character. He writes "If military courage is democratized, as it was in the Punjab, the government cannot afford to flout the opinion of the people."[73] About the popularity of Ranjit Singh as a monarch Sinha writes, "Ranjit's administration was the nearest approach to the ideal of popular monarchy that was possible in

72 *Ibid.*, p. 151.
73 *Ibid.*, p.139.

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those days and in those circumstances."[74] For Sinha Ranjit Singh in court and camp is a fascinating study. Great activity of mind and body was the prominent feature of his character. Though licentious and lover of alcohol, yet he was efficient, dynamic and liberal, he was to Guru Gobind Singh what lenin was to Karl Marx, what omar was to Muhammad. Guru Gobind Singh called in the human energy of the Sikhs from all other sides and made it flow in a particular direction. Ranjit Singh made the Khalsa panth an exclusively military force and this character resulted in a "theocratic confederate feudalism." Ranjit Singh compelled the entire system "to gyrate himself and Sikh valour flared up brightly."[75]

Commenting on the relations of the Maharaja with the Khalsa Panth Sinha writes that he was not the supreme embodiment of all authority. One great limitation was imposed on him by the living principle of a commonwealth. Some check was imposed also by the Akalis, by the martial nobility and even by the common people possessed of arms.[76] In any case, the theocratic commonwealth or the Khalsa Panth of which each individual Sikh considered himself a member was 'a potent force' to which the Maharaja 'always showed due deference', Sinha continues his argument 'but his deference to the Khalsa was not like the

74 *Ibid.*, p. 185.
75 *Ibid.*, p. 189
76 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

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seeming deference showed by Julius and Augustus Caesar to the name of the Roman Republic, when he established Caesarism."[77] Ranjit Singh regarded himself merely as a 'drum of the Khalsa' (Ranjit Nagara) for the assertion of their political supremacy. "He might have been absolute but he always acted in the name of the Khalsa. He did not assume the title of King but rather the impersonal designation of Sarkar to denote the source of orders. In refereeing to his government he always used the term Khalsa ji or Sarkar Khalsa." On his seals he had the inscription 'God the helper of Ranjit."[78]

Sinha's Ranjit Singh has two aspects of a picture. The one aspects of it was his relations with the British in which he is shown as weak, pathetic and inert, lacking both diplomacy and statesmanship. The second aspect shows Ranjit Singh, under whom the Sikh nation emerged brilliantly, a popular military monarchy, radiating the aspiration of the people of Punjab and symbolizing a tradition of freedom and strength.[79] Thus, N.K. Sinha, besides all the weakness and the yielding nature of Ranjit Singh, accepts him as a great national hero of Indian history. In his perception, "an Indian chieftain who could secure the support of all sections of his people, who could defend the North-Western

77 *Ibid.*, p. 137.
78 *Ibid.*, p. 137.
79 See also S.K. Bajaj's article, 'Historians on Ranjit Singh: A Study of Their Approaches' in *The Panjab Past And Present*(ed. Ganda Singh), Punjabi University, Patiala, April, 1981, p.8.

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frontier against a powerful Afghanistan and unruly border tribes and administer it successfully, who could train an army whose fighting qualities came as a revelation to their famous opponents, who could to a certain extent furnish Indian nationalism with what it greatly needs-a tradition of strength- must always stand in the forefront of great men of Indian history."[80] According to Sinha, Ranjit Singh had achieved all these objects during his life time. "Among Ranjit Singh's principal achievements," writes Sinha, "we must count his very successful defence of his kingdom against the Afghans." India had lost her North-western frontier region to Afghanistan and she could never be able to re-conquer these region in future if the Sikhs would not have re-conquered these region and Ranjit Singh consolidated his sway in those regions. "It is a certainty that if the disorganized Misls had retained their hold over the Punjab, at least the North-Western frontier region and Kashmir would have become a part of Afghanistan under the Barkzais."[81] Ranjit Singh conquered all these regions from the Afghans and this was the greatest contribution to India. That is why Sinha regards Maharaja Ranjit Singh as the national hero of the Indian history.

80 N.K. Sinha, *Ranjit Singh*, pp. 189-90.
81 *Ibid.*, p. 190.

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A.C. BANERJEE'S INTERPRETATION OF SIKH HISTORY

I

There is a long line of Bengali historians who wrote on the Sikhs. Indubhusan Banerjee, N.K. Sinha and A.C. Banerjee are the renounced historians among these Bengali galaxy of historians, Indubhusan Banerjee was a pioneer and N. K. Sinha and A.C. Banerjee followed him in the same line. In other words it may be said that N.K. Sinha and A.C. Banerjee were a production of Indhubhusan Banerjee in the historian's field. A.C. Banerjee wrote on the same subject which was covered by Indubhusan Banerjee but his interpretation and approach is different from his mentor.

In the third decade of twentieth century when the university of Calcutta introduced the study of Sikh history in the post-Graduate syllabus of the Department of History. Indubhusan Banerjee was the scholar who could take up the challenge to teach the history of the Sikhs in the college street campus. He had behind him a century old tradition of reading and research on the history of the Sikhs. N.K. Sinha and A.C. Banerjee followed him. Both of these historians have a prominent place among the historians having expertise on Sikh history.

A.C. Banerjee was born in 1910 and was a student of Indubhusan Banerjee. He started his academic career as a

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lecturer in history in Calcutta University. The details about the early career of the author are not available nor were given in any of his work. He, serving the various institutions as a Lecturer, Reader, Professor and in the capacity of the Head, the author retired in 1975 as a 'Guru Nanak professor of Indian History at Jadavpur University, Calcutta. He was also nominated as 'Member of West Bengal legislative Council' as an educationist. He also remained president of the Board of Secondary Education, West Bengal.

A.C. Banerjee's association with the study of the history of the Sikhs goes back to the year 1943 when he was initiated to this branch of historical analysis by his mentor, Indubhusan Banerjee. Though his first work was the reproduction of J.D. Cunningham's account of the *Anglo-Sikh Relations,* which was got published in 1949 but he was identified as a Historian of the Sikhs with his Scholarly work on *Guru Nanak and his Times* in 1971. Then he wrote another scholarly book entitled *Guru Nanak To Guru Gobind Singh* in 1978. With this work he was known among the historians of Sikh history as a new Bengali historian. In 1985 he wrote on *The Khalsa Raj.* In this book he seeks to highlight the achievements and failures of the Sikhs, the political sphere during the period from Guru Nanak Dev and ending with the incorporation of the Punjab into the British Indian empire in

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1849. These four books of A.C. Banerjee have been discussed and analysed in this chapter. His concept and contribution of Sikh history is applauded as it is relatively objective.

II

In March, 1970, A.C. Banerjee delivered a 'Sita Ram Kohli Memorial Lecture' at Punjabi University, Patiala, organized by the Department of Punjab Historical Studies. He spoke on *Guru Nanak and His times*. This book is an extended version of that lecture. It has been published by the Punjabi University, Patiala. It covers 231 pages in six chapters. It deals with the life and teachings of the Guru as well as his place in Indian history. The author fairly discusses the political background of the Punjab and the Bhakti cult in India before the advent of the Guru Nanak. The author also throws light on the society and religion in the Punjab during the times of Guru.

Discussing the political background of the Punjab during the times of Guru Nanak, A.C. Banerjee is of the opinion that 'Guru Nanak (1469-1539) lived in an age of political distegration' and the cursory review of this situation enables us to understand the position of the Hindus in Guru Nanak's age. The author goes on write that "The Punjab had come under Muslim rule as a result of Sultan Mahmud's invasion; when the Lodhi regime fell at Panipat this province had five centuries experience of continuous

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Muslim rule. That experience had crushed the backbone of the Hindus; it had reduced them into a frustrated and demoralised community unable to defend its elementary rights"[1] Centuries of Persecution had killed those moral qualities which sustain a people in adversity and open the road to regeneration.

His summary of political development in North India from the invasion of Mahmood to the establishment of Mughal rule by Babur is naturally based on the Muslim sources. References to Sikandar Lodhi's policy of religious intolerance provide the background for Guru Nanak's massage of harmony and tolerance. The reader feels convinced that A.C. Banerjee does not exaggerate when he writes that "The advent of Guru Nanak was the signal of a new awakening", and "the recovery of truth and virtue was the essential prelude to the beginning of a new era."[2]

Guru Nanak delivered a powerful and effective challenge to traditional Hinduism as he found it actually practised in his days. But in the opinion of A.C. Banerjee, Guru Nanak was not a pioneer in this respect. According to him, the role of Guru Nanak 'as a religious teacher should be studied in the context of what may be called the Medieval Reformation'.[3] This reformatory movement covered the period of several centuries, passing

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1 A.C. Banerjee, *Guru Nanak and His Times,* Punjabi University, Patiala, 2000, p. 30.
2 *Ibid.,* p. 31.
3 *Ibid.* p. 32.

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through different stages and revolving round distinct strands of ideas and practices. The cult of Bhakti or the loving adoration of God gave this reformatory movement a basic unity. In the opinion of the author, 'the development of the Bhakti cult is intended to put the origin and progress of Sikhism in the perspective of the Medieval Reformation.[4]

Using the statement of Macauliffe, the author says that "Saints and thinkers who were dissatisfied with the superstitions and religious vagaries of the Hindus...gradually evolved a belief in one God and Preceded Guru Nanak as the dawn sunrise."[5] The author clarifies further that "the dawn was rich in thought; the sunrise brought it into more fruitful contact with the life of the people by giving it greater coherence and spiritual duties." The author asserts that chronologically also Guru Nanak was the last great medieval leader of religion and he brought a new synthesis to scattered ideas which formed his heritage. Thus, 'Sikhism derived inspiration and vigour from the perennial spring of India's spiritual life... And 'by incorporating in the *Adi Granth* a very large number of compositions of the earlier 'saints and thinkers' Guru Arjan gave formal recognition to Sikhism's links with the past.[6]

So far the social and religious condition of the Punjab was concerned, the author narrates that "For the Muslim invaders-

4 *Ibid.*, p. 65.
5 Macaulifee, *The Sikh Religion,* Vol.VI, New Delhi, 1963, p.1.
6 *Ibid.*, p. 66

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from Mahmud of Ghazni in the eleventh century to Shah Zaman, the Afghan, in the eighteenth-the Punjab was the gateway of India". That slavery of centuries 'was the Punjab's experience.' With the conquering armies, came a new faith, a new culture, a new way of life, a continuous stream of warriors, administrators, theologians and saints crossed the north-western mountain passes and gave medieval India its form and colour' and with this, the first foundation of the Indo-Muslim culture was laid. It was to find its highest perfection in the time of the great Mughals.[7]

The author writes that of all the Indian provinces other than Sindh, 'the Punjab had the longest and the most varied experience of Muslim rule.' Therefore, 'the impact of Islam in all its aspects-military, political, religious, social-fell most powerfully on the Punjab.'[8] In this light, the 'religious life in the Punjab in the days of Guru Nanak did not lack in variety and even richness.' The author says that 'perhaps in no other province of India there was so much scope for intermingling of religious ideas and practices. But all faiths appear to have seized by a moral paralysis which crippled man's pursuit of Truth.'[9]

Dealing with the life and sources, A.C. Banerjee had to rely exclusively upon the Sikh and Muslim sources. He sums up his difficulties by writing that "It is the historian's task to recover the

7 *Ibid*, p. 68.
8 *Ibid*. p. 69.
9 *Ibid*. p. 95.

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kernel of truth from legendary anecdotes. History knows only one Nanak; there is no question of a second one who is formless."[10] The latest authors like Dr. McLoed'[11] and J.S. Grewal[12] have not found themselves in any better position. Apart from the Guru's own writings in Guru Granth Sahib and the *Varaans* of Bhai Gurdas there is no contemporary account. A.C. Banerjee's critical discussion on the *Janamsakhis* illustrates his methodology. The only two known dates are given in the *Janamsakhis* and these are belonged to the birth and death of Guru Nanak. Even for these two dates there is scope for difference of opinion. The only non-Sikh semi-contemporary account is *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* of Mohsin Fani. Even this account is by no means a satisfactory account. "This reflects the semi-legendary character "which Sikh tradition had already begun to assign to the founder of the faith. His testimony can hardly be regarded as that of an independent witness."[13] In Cunningham's opinion, the author of *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* was "garrulous and Some what credulous Mahomedan"[14] Therefore, the author is of the opinion about *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* that 'on the whole, *Dabistan* is of greater use as a clue to the

10 *Ibid* p. 99.
11 W.H. McLord, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion,* Oxford, 1968, p. 6.
12 J.S. Grewal, *Guru Nanak in History,* Punjab University, Chandigarh, 1969.
13 A.C. Banerjee, *Guru Nanak And His Times,* Patiala, 2000, pp. 97 and 108.
14 J.D. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs,* New Delhi, 1985, p. 53.

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seventeenth-century image of Guru Nanak than a biographical narrative.'[15]

So far the British sources are concerned, these also 'can claim no independent evidentiary value so far as the live of the Guru is concerned. They are of some interest simply because they represent Sikh tradition at different stages.[16] Yet A.C. Banerjee has succeeded in giving us a fairly complete and convincing sketch of the biography of the first Guru, and it is well-deserved tribute to his historical judgement to say that his conclusions have not been materially shaken by recent researchers.

So far the account of Guru Nanak's travellings is concerned, a full and consistent account of the Guru's *udasis* (travels) in Indian sub-continent and the neighboring countries like Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and the Arab countries, is not available even today. Epigraphic evidence relating to the Guru's visit to Baghdad, utilised by A.C. Banerjee, has also recently been given a different interpretation by McLoed.[17] But a recent archaeological discovery in ceylon supports the tradition of the Guru's visit to the Island.

About the Guru's visit to Baghded A.C. Banerjee conclusively writes after a thorough discussion, "Historians are not competent to decide the issue raised by the battle of translators. It may be noted that McLoed's expert is not quite

15 A.C. Banerjee, *Guru Nanak and His Times,* Patiala, 2000, p. 108.
16 *Ibid.*, p. 109.
17 McLoed, *Guru Nanak And the Sikh Religion,* Oxford, 1968, pp. 125-132.

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certain that the name of Baba Nanak does not occur in the inscription. If the name is there, and if the inscription is dated 1811-12, we would have a continuous tradition about Guru Nanak's visit to Baghdad covering a period of three centuries. The American experts translation also points out a continuous tradition till about 1700. If one takes an extreme view and rejects the inscription, the testimony of Bhai Gurdas remains a sufficiently solid basis for the tradition concerning Guru Nanak's visit to Baghdad. It may be added that saints or prophets have never been interested in leaving archaeological records or remains to commemorate their visits to different places."[18]

As a matter of facts, the chronology of travels of the Guru remains confusing. It is not assertively known when the *udasi* period in the Guru's career came to an end and when he settled as a householder at Kartarpur. The author accepts the year 1520 when the Guru started a life of settlement at Kartarpur.[19]

Describing Guru Nanak's teachings as a message of truth and peace, A.C. Banerjee leads his reader to the conclusion that "Guru Nanak was far in advance of the *bhagtas* so far as the creation of a new community was concerned."[20] Guru Nanak told the people what to aim at and how to proceed. The author writes that "The story of Guru Nanak's life and achievement has no

18 A.C. Banerjee, *Guru Nanak and His Times,* pp. 135-38.
19 *Ibid.* p. 141.
20 *Ibid.*, p. 187.

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parallel in the annals of this ancient land. It is not enough to call him the greatest of the sons of the Punjab. He must be counted among the greatest of the sons of India. He was the founder of the last of the great religions of the world. He planted a political sappling which has blossomed into one of great literatures of India. He laid the foundations of a brotherhood which has enriched our national heritage by struggle against religious intolerance, social injustice and denial of political freedom. History must pay its homage to one who- in serving God- served his country so well."[21]

A.C. Banerjee wrote a review article on Indubhusan Banerjee's *Evolution of The Khalsa* in 1978.[22] He was a student of Indubhusan Banerjee. He appreciates his teacher's work but as a historian he was also aware of the historical discrepancies in the work. Therefore, he also pointed out those discrepancies in his mentor's work which were left out. Indubhusan Banerjee was a pioneer in writing on the Sikh Gurus among the Bengali historians and perhaps A.C. Banerjee was the latest. Therefore, it was but natural that he deals with all those discrepancies which were pointed out by him in his mentor's work. For example A.C. Banerjee points out that "The role of historical events in shaping Sikhism and in regulating its response to new situations is

21 *Ibid*. pp. 205-06
22 Fauja Singh (ed.), *Historians and Historiography of The Sikhs,* New Delhi, 1978, pp. 239-257.

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stressed, but very little is said about the impact of socio-economic forces." Again, the author writes that "His (I.B.) efforts to forester trade and industry among the Sikhs have not received more than a passing reference in the narrative although the growing strength of the new community found a solid basis in economic enterprises."[23] It is interesting to note that A.C. Banerjee deals in detail the organizational system of the Sikh Gurus such as *Manji* and *Masand* System. By these system the growing community became very prosperous. The author writes, "an organized system of collection was called for in view of the numerical expansion of the community and its wider geographical distribution."[24]

Lastly it can be said safely about A.C. Banerjee's work *Guru Nanak and His Times* that the learned author is the latest modern historian to attempt a full, comprehensive and critical reconstruction of the life and times of Guru Nanak. It goes without saying that there is a lot of difference in the approach and interpretation between his and Indubhusan Banerjee's work. On many times, the work of Indubhusan Banerjee irks the readers but A.C. Banjerjee's work is free from this nature. He is successful in reconstructing the history of Guru Nanak and it has been well-received by the scholars of Punjab history.

III

23 A.C. Banerjee's article on 'Indubhusan Banerjee' in Fauja Singh, (ed.), *op.cit.* pp. 248 and 249.

24 A.C. Banerjee, *Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh,* New Delhi, 1978, p. 111.

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A.C. Banerjee's book *Guru Nanak To Guru Gobind Singh* is a collection of fifteen articles written between the years 1943-75, as the[25] author tells us himself in the preface of the book. These articles were written on the special occasions and were intended to deal with special problems. On the suggestions of the friends, these were revised and to some extent altered in the light of fress evidence and then got published in the book form in 1978. Though the author claims in humbleness that these 'essays cannot be offer full treatment of the subjects taken up for discussion' but the manners in which these essays have been set up chronologically, present the central point of Sikhism. The central point is the historical development of Sikhism. Every essay is linked with each other in such a way that the book does not seem as the compilation of the essays rather it seems the history of the development of Sikhism from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh.

The first three essays represent the historical background of Sikhism in which the religious work done by Baba Farid and the other Bhakatas is discussed in detail.

The Bengal Vaishnavism, which was a contrast to Sikhism, was dealt in a full chapter. The rest of the twelve essays present the history of Sikhism in the Guru period. Two full essays are

25 A.C. Banerjee, *Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh,* Mohan Lal, Gupta, New Delhi, 1978.

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devoted to Guru Nanak and three are to Guru Gobind Singh. The author's views which he expressed about Guru Nanak have already been discussed in the previous portion in which *Guru Nanak and His Times* is dealt. Therefore, the analysis of these two chapter is being left. One essay is devoted to J.N. Sarkar's work on Sikh history. These essays should be considered as the chapters of the book.

The author is of the opinion that before the advent of Sikhism by Guru Nanak, the Punjab was the nearest region to the Islamic countries. 'There was large scale immigration of Persians, Turks and Afghans into the Punjab during the long period of Ghaznavid rule in that province during the eleventh and twelvth centuries.'[26] They adopted the language which was prevalent in this region at that time. This language was Punabi. The author says that 'some Punjabi words had obtained currency even outside the limits of India. That is why 'several Persian poets of the Ghaznavid period have employed Punjabi words in their poetry'. After the establishment of Muslim rule, the Persian and Turkish way of life influenced the language and culture of the north India. Delhi became the centre of the vast empire and the local dilects were mixed with Persian and Turkish. Resultantly a mixed language developed here, known to contemporaries as

26 Ibid, p. 2.

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Hindvi or Dehlvi, as Amir Khusro informs us. The name Dehlvi survived till the days of Abul Fazl.[27]

This was the linguistic and the cultural legacy which Baba Shaikh Farid got in this region. He spent the greater part of his life in the Punjabi region. Therefore, 'he preferred the spoken language of the rural areas which was simple, direct, less open to external influences-to the artificial combination of diverse linguistic elements known as Hindvi or Dehlvi, In other words, he used the old Punjabi language in his oral teaching as also in such compositions as he chose to put in a local garb.'[28]

Macauliffe says, "It is certain that it was Shaikh Brahm who composed the Sloks and hymns bearing the name of Farid in the *Granth Sahib,* though he used the name of the founder of the spiritual line as his poetical *nom de plume."*[29] Therefore, the author is of the view that Sufism provided a working precedent for Guru Nanak's adoption of the Punjabi language as the sole medium of his communication with the people.

Describing inter-religious relations during the medieval times, the author says that Indian religions had succeeded in absorbing the alien faiths brought into the country by the Greek and central Asian invaders but Christianity and Zoroastrians did not lose their identity. The political and military power of the

27 *Ibid.* p. 2.
28 *Ibid.* p. 3.
29 Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, vol. VI, New Delhi, 1963, pp. 357-59.

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Muslim Arabs stimulated the expansionist movement which had started in pre-Islamic days. The author says that 'during the post-conquest centuries proselytization was accelerated by political pressure on the part of the State, formulated and enforced by Governors and Sultans, which demorlised and tempted the politically helpless and socially disintegrated Hindus; perhaps a much stronger instrument of coercion was the petty tyranny exercised by Muslim officials, particularly the Qazis, who dominated the country-side.'[30]

In this way, Islam represented its might and majesty in the administrative sphere of India. It was the strongest force in the Punjab than the rest of India because the Punjab was geographically contiguous to the Muslim countries and thus, was in a position to maintain continuous contract with those countries. During the fifteenth century a phase of the Islamic rule (the Lodhis) was abolishing and the new phase the Mughals was knocking the door of India.

In discussing the inter-religious relations in Medieval India, the author is intended to show that by the arrival of the better element' in Muslim society' the Indian environment enriched itself but it was interrupted by the communal policies of the arrogant Mughal emperors. Sikhism advented in such a millieu.

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30 A.C. Banerjee, *Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh*, pp. 21-22.

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In the third chapter entitled 'Sikhism and Bengal Vaishnavism' the author deals comparatively with the Bengal Vaishnavism and Sikhism. In fact, according to the author both these movements were a contrast to each other. The use of language as a medium of teachings was also separates these two movements from each other. Vaishnavism adopted Sanskrit while Sikhism adopted the local language, Punjabi, 'the language of the people'. Resultantly, Bengal Vaishnavism 'appealed to high and low alike, to the learned as also to the illiterate', while the Sikhism attracted comparatively, uneducated and socially inferior classes.' Being Sanskrit based, Vaishnavism spread out of the borders of Bengal while Sikhism remained mainly within the Punjabi speaking people. But this very reason became the main factor to consolidate Sikhism as a well-knit community while Vaishnavism could not achieve this status.[31]

Conclusively the author opines that "the virtual confinement within the geographical limits of the Punjab, however, gave Sikhism a compactness and solidarity which Bengal Vaishnavism could never attain due partly to its wide distribution in different regions. Living within the boundaries of a single province, speaking the same language, familiar with the same political, economic and social condition, the Sikhs lived as fellow members

31 *Ibid.* p. 38

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of a common society, united by religious and social ties which became stronger and stronger with the laps of time. There was no such geographical, political, economic or social unity within Vaishnavism; the bond of a common faith was there, but it was not strong enough to transcend all barriers."[32]

Delineating the history of Sikhism from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, the author is of the opinion that the political 'problem did not arise during the time of Guru Nanak and his three successors' because 'the number of Guru Nanak's disciples did not attain considerable proportions and his teachings did not make a stir till he settled down at Kartarpur. During the period of the *Udasis* he was cut off more or less from his homeland and a wandering pilgrim seen at intervals years did not provoke the rulers to hostile action.[33] It was a period of propagation of the faith and development of the community. Though Ibrahim Lodhi was the Sultan of Delhi at that time yet 'he was no persecutor like his father' Sikander Lodhi. Secondly his entanglements with the invasions of Babur 'Kept him off the track of minor matter'. So far the Babur's invasions on India are concerned; the author says that 'Babur's victory at Panipat meant much more than a change of dynasty in Delhi. It was during the period of transition from Afghan to Mughal rule that Guru Nanak passed the last years of

32 Ibid. p. 38
33 A.C. Banerjee, *Guru Nanak To Guru Gobind Singh*, p. 91.

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his life at Kartarpur.' Elaborating the political condition during the period of Guru Angad Dev, the author is of the view that there was a 'topsy-turvyism' in India and it was a period of uncertainty and restlessness, leaving its ugly scars on all aspects of the people's life. 'This topsy turuyism did not, however, prevent the Sikhs from organizing themselves and developing their faith during the pontificate of Angad or in the days of his successor, Amar Das (1552-1574). The State did not seek to strike at them, nor did they seek to challenge the State.'[34]

Though the number of the Sikhs had been steadily on the increase but the era of peaceful co-existence followed with the liberal regime of Akbar. Therefore, this period also did not attract the governmental zealously. 'The brief period of the 'pontifical of Ram Das (1574-81) did not mark any crucial stage in the development of Sikhism. Preaching continued and the number of faithful increased. This period 'practically concided with the most crucial stage in the development of Akbar's religious views.[35] During this time the Sikh religion grew like a gigantic tree: There was a remarkable continuity in the organizational development of Sikhism in the second half of the sixteenth century. Guru Arjan's activities were by no means confined to this sphere only. 'His greatest achievement was the compilation of the Granth Sahib,

34 *Ibid.* p. 105
35 *Ibid.* p. 110.

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the sacred Book of the Sikh'. This was completed in 1604.[36] The author assertively says that in the field of social works also Guru Arjan's contribution was remarkable. "whatever the actual details might be, it is not difficult to agree with Macauliffe's conclusion that Arjan's 'fame and influence largely increased owing to the respect the emperor had shown him'.[37]

The author discusses in length the circumstances leading to the martyrdom of Guru Arjan. In this discussion, the author critically studied the statements of the Emperor Jahangir and Mohsni Fani, the letters of Shaikh Ahmad Sarhandi and Father Jerome Xavier and the Gurmukhi writings as well. The author is critical of the statements written by J.N. Sarkar. By discussing all these sources, the author concludes with the statement of Earnest Trumpp. Trumpp writes, "whichever way he died, his death was ascribed to the bigotry and cruelty of the Muhammadan Government, and his disciples were burning to revenge it. The death of Guru Arjan is, therefore, the great turning point in the development of the Sikh community, as from that time, the struggle commenced, which changed the whole character of this reformatory religious movement."[38] The author is also of the view that such statements represent a retrospective view of history. At the time of Guru Arjan's death the Sikhs were not in a position to

36 Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. III, pp. 14-15.
37 A.C. Banerjee, *Guru Nanak To Guru Gobind Singh*, p. 112.
38 *Ibid.* p. 124-129.

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fight for revenge; there was no immediate struggle against the imperial authority... The immediate problem of the threatened community was to protect itself from further demonstration of imperial wrath."[39]

So far the account of Guru Hargobind Sahib is concerned, the author tried his best to analyse the Sikh literature according to the historical view point but the problem is that he had the sources at his disposal which was available to his predecessors. Therefore, his conclusion is not different from Indubhusan Banerjee or Gokal Chand Narang. There is a difference only of degrees. But inspite of this, A.C. Banerjee presents his view point in a moderate language. After discussing all the details of the different aspects of Guru's life, the author concludes that "the crisis of 1605 did not result in the disruption of the Sikh community; the organizational basis provided by the fifth Guru was strong enough to absorb the shock of his sudden death and the succession of a young boy. His son Hargobind secured the vacant Gurushipby virtue of his nomination."[40] Regarding the new armed policy by the Guru, the author says that "Guru Hargobind's military confrontation with the Mughal Government was not necessarily an integral part of his decision to have a sword-belt as his *seli* and to wear his turban with a royal aigrette.

39 *Ibid.* p. 129.
40 *Ibid.* p. 132.

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He forged a weapon, indeed, but probably he did not mean to use it immediately or in normal circumstances."[41] The battles which he had to fight or the policy which he had to adopt was purely a timely measure for self-defence.

During the Guruship of Guru Har Rai and Guru Harkrishan, the author says, there was no confrontation between the Sikhs and the Mughal Government. This was due to the results of the policies of Dara's influence in the Mughal court. The author is of the opinion that "whatever the reason might be, the Mughal Government did not strike any blow at the Sikhs after Guru Hargobind's battle at Kartarpur in 1634 and the infant Sikh military organization was allowed to develop along the lines indicated by him."[42] But the author is not decisive about the restraint attitude of Aurangzeb towards Guru Har Rai and Guru Har Krishan. The author writes 'why he (Aurangzeb) pursued a policy of restraint is a question which cannot be answered until fresh source materials are available for scholarly scrutiny."

During the time of Guru Tegh Bahadur's Guruship, there was a contrasting difference in the imperial attitude between the beginning and the end. In the begining, the author writes that "we do not know whether Aurangzib took any interest in the affairs of the Sikhs during the years following Guru Har Krishan's death.

41 *Ibid.* p. 147.
42 *Ibid.* p. 151

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There is no evidence that he interfered in the succession disput in 1664 or gave any direct or indirect to Tegh Bahadur's principal rival Dhir Mal."[43] But during the middle and the last phase of Guru Tegh Bahadur's period, Aurangzib's attitude was very clear. The Guru visited almost the whole of India and he intensively preached in the Bangar and Malwa area of Punjab. Aurangzib saw a grave threat for the imperial authority in these activities of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Therefore, he got the Guru arrested on two or three times and ultimately he persecuted the Guru in 1675.[44] A.C. Banerjee described the two factors which lead the persecution of the Guru. The first factor was the Malwa tour of the Guru and the second factor was arrival of the Kashmiri Pandits. The author says, "The best part of that work was done in the Malwa region at a time when Sher Afghan Khan's policy was creating consternation in the Hindu society of Kashmir. It would thus appear that the Malwa episode prepared the ground for the final tragedy."[45] The author goes to say, "probably the two issues were combined, both being serious enough from the Mughal point of view. As we have tried to show, the issues were interconnected: the Guru's activities in Malwa prepared the ground for the

43 *Ibid.* p. 162
See also Fauja Singh Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Guru Tegh Bahadur Prophet and Martyre,* Punjabi University, Patiala, pp. 90-104.
45 *Ibid.* p. 181

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Kahmiri Pandits appeal to them."[46] Aurangzib's purpose seems to have been to get rid of one who not only championed *tilak* and *Janju* but also inspired the Malwa peasantry with the vision of a new life.

A.C. Banerjee devoted a full-fledged twelfth chapter of thirteen pages on Sir J.N. Sarkar's interpretation of Sikh history. The author is the critic of this interpretation. J.N. Sarkar wrote two monumental work on the Mughal period of Indian history. The one is *History of Aurangzib* in four volumes and the other is *Fall of The Mughal Empire* in four volumes. During the whole of this period, the Sikhs played a very important part in the Indian polity. But J.N. Sarkar ignored this part of the Sikhs and dealt them very carelessly. Wherever, the great historian commented on the Sikhs, he commented negatively. A.C. Banerjee felt this attitude and objected. He writes, "The all India character of the religious reform movement was not even limited at, nor was any indication given of the distinctive character of Nanak's religion."[47] Following statements of Sir J.N. Sarkar referred to by A.C. Banerjee.

Guru Nanak's 'aims...were abondoned when his successor in the leadership of the Sikhs set up a temporal dominion for themselves and made military drill take the place of moral self reform and spiritual growth.' A.C. Banerjee objected strongly on

46 *Ibid.* p. 181
47 A.C. Banerjee, *Guru Nanak to Guru Singh*, New Delhi, 1978, p. 186.

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this statements and writes "This statements was supported, not by any historical analysis of the development of Sikhism but by a quotation from an article written by the poet Rabinder Nath Tagore. "The author asserts that there are so many references in the writings of Guru Gobind Singh which could be consulted in any account of the development of Sikhism but Sir J.N. Sarkar ignored them entirely.

Sir J.N. Sarkar commented on the Masand system set up by the fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Dev. Guru Hargobind's armed policy; Guru Tegh Bahadur's way of preaching; Guru Gobind Singh's creation of the Khalsa; Sikh struggle after Guru Gobind Singh and ultimately the Sikh struggle against the Mughals and the Afghans during eighteenth century. Sarkar described all these events negatively. For example, Sarkar commenting on the relations between the Sikh Gurus and the Mughal emperors writes that "Before the reign of Aurangzeb the Sikhs were never persecuted on religious grounds, and their collision with the Mughal Government which began in Jahangir's time was due entirely to secular causes and the change in the character of the Guru's was solely responsible for it."[48] The other statements given by Sarkar, on the Sikhs, are also equally objectionable.

48 *Ibid.* p. 189

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Though, A.C. Banerjee discussed all these statements one by one but to be short and brief, here is given the concluding remarks on the approach and interpretation of Sir J.N. Sarkar. The author writes that Sir J.N. Sarkar based his remarks about the Sikhs mainly on four sources to which Sarkar regards as original sources of Sikh history. These four sources are, Macauliffe's *Sikh Religion,* Hughe's *Dictionary of Islam* (article by F. Pincott), *Debistan-i Mazahib* and Sujan Rai Bhandari's *Khulas-tut-Twarikh.*[49] A.C. Banerjee asserts that these are not the original sources of Sikh history. He argues "Macauliffe's work can be regarded as an original source in a very limited sense only; it is a summary of Punjabi chronicles not even a full translation of any of them." Moreover Sarkar did not use his translation rather he used his narrative.[50]

He should have consulted the original Punjabi writings "at least those relating to Mughal-Sikh relations. There are so many contemporary accounts in Punjabi like Sainapat's *Sri Gur Sobha* "Sarkar used the Assamee Buranji's and Rajsthani poems while dealing with the Ahom and Rajput wars, but Punjabi materials were not considered necessary for his study of Sikh affairs. Pincott's article had no claim at all to be treated as an original source. Mohsin Fani's account does not cover the period with

49 *Ibid.*, p. 195
50 *Ibid.*

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which Sarkar was primarily concerned, i.e., the reign of Aurangzib"[51] He ignored all the Punjabi sources of Sikh history. Forster, Malcolm, Cunnigham and even Gokul Chand Narang are ignored. These are the authorities on Sikh history. Lastly A.C. Banerjee ends his article with this statement that "one feels sad that the greatest historian of modern India did not leave for posterity a more complete, balanced and sympathetic view of Sikh religion, society and political development."[52]

Generally, the historians confuse while dealing with the post-martyrdom period of Guru Tegh Bahadur. It is conceived by the historians that whatever Guru Gobind Singh was done after the martyrdom of his father Guru Tegh Bahadur, it was in the reaction of his father's death. A.C. Banerjee seems careful about such confusion, therefore, he does not involve in such discussion. His opinion is that Guru Tegh Bahadur suffered martyrdom for the sake of *dharma.* So, "it was now for the disciples to come forward and prove that the Gurus had not died in vain. It was under the Tenth Guru's leadership that they responded to the call of history. He gave institutional expression in the military-cum-political sphere."[53] By the creation of Khalsa, the Sikhs were organized in such a way that they seemed that they were armed because, the sword (re-named as Kirpan) was made compulsory to

51 *Ibid.*
52 *Ibid.* p. 196.
53 *Ibid* p. 90.

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wear by every baptised Sikh. Therefore, some historians draw their conclusions if the Sikhs were making their preparation for a war. A.C. Banerjee also seems to have these views. He writes "Sikhism was no longer on the defensive; it was not prepared for an offensive role. What Guru Hargobind had kept implicit was made explicit through the creation of the Khalsa."[54] But the author immediately comes to the point when he says that Guru Gobind Singh's "own role he conceived to be that spreading the faith, saving the saints and extirpating all tyrants." The main base of the Khalsa was 'spiritual fervour and freedom from fear' and it 'emanated directly from the founder's teachings.'

Guru Gobind Singh inspired the Khalsa to wage a struggle against the tyranny and injustice. The author links this struggle with the war of liberation in the eighteenth century. He writes that "Thus, war against tyranny was made an integral part of religious life. This was the prelude to the war of liberation in the eighteenth century, culminating in the establishment of the Sikh state on the ruins of Mughal and Afghan imperialism." The author is of the opinion that this war of liberation was based on the higher moral force and 'that higher moral force was drawn from and sustained by the teachings of the Gurus. Thus, the author is justified in his

54 *Ibid.* p. 90.

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conclusion that from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh the mission and objective was the same.

IV

In 1985, A.C. Banerjee got published his book on *The Khalsa Raj.* The title is very interesting. No historian before him designated the Sikh Rule as *The Khalsa Raj.* Many a few books had been written on this topic before him like Gulshan Lal Chopra's *Punjab As A Sovereign State*[55] Barkat Rai Chopra's *Kingdom of The Punjab*[56] and Khushwant Singh's *History of The Sikhs* Volume Second.[57] Therefore, the subject had been already discussed in a sufficient way. Even N.K. Sinha, a senior colleague of A.C. Banerjee had written on this topic in his two books entitled *The Rise of the Sikh Power*[58] and *Ranjit Singh*[59] Yet, in spite of this, A.C. Banerjee attempted to write a full-fledged book on this subject and it is interesting to note that the interpretation and approach of the author is different from his predecessors. The learned author himself writes that "I can not claim to have discovered new facts; I have used facts noticed by previous writers, trying to stress those which appeared to be particularly significant and to pinpoint certain features which are sometimes

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55 Gulshan Lal Chopra, *The Punjab As A Sovereign State,* Lahore, 1928, reprinted by VVRI, Hoshiarpur, 1960.
56 Barkat Rai Chopta, *Kingdom of the Punjab,* V.V.R.I., Hoshiarpur, 1969.
57 Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I (1469-1849), Oxford University press, London, 1964.
58 N.K. Sinha, *Rise of Sikh Power,* Calcutta University, 1936.
59 N.K. Sinha, *Ranjit Singh,* University of Calcutta, 1933.

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ignored or underestimated."[60] Because its interpretation of the facts and approach to the subject is different and new, therefore, the book has its own place in the history of the Sikhs.

The author tries his best to trace the political ideas of the Sikhs from the days of Guru Nanak to the period of the establishment of Khalsa Raj during the eighteenth and nineteenth countries. Besides this, this is also a study of the failure of the Sikhs in the political sphere during the period ending with the annexation of the Punjab in the British Indian Empire. In fact, 'The Rise and Fall of the Khalsa Raj' should have the exact title of the book. The fact is that no historian can expect full approval for his selection and interpretation of the facts. In this light, the author has succeeded in his attempt to provide 'food for thought'.

The author is of the view that though the political ideas of the Sikhs had its roots 'in the teachings of the Gurus, particularly in the new complexion given to the Panth by Guru Gobind Singh', yet the actual 'Political history of the Sikhs begins with Banda (Singh). The Misals took up his idea as also his method, and laid the foundation of the monarchical system which reached its fulfillment under Ranjit Singh.

The author has rightly stated that 'None of the Sikh Gurus envisaged the foundation of an independent Sikh State in the

60 A.C. Banerjee, *The Khalsa Raj,* New Delhi, 1985, p. VII (Preface).

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sense in which the term 'State' is used in political science' But unlike other religious teachers of medieval India they 'had a deep awareness of political problems -Maladministration and insecurity- which affected the daily life of the common people' in their times.[61]

The Sikh Gurus adopted such an organizational system that it developed as a State within itself. Guru Nanak organized his Sikhs into *sangats.* Guru Amar Das, the third Guru, reorganized these *sangats* into Manji system. This Manji system was again replaced by Masand system during the time of Guru Arjan Dev. Thus, the Sikhs were organized in such a way that the Guru was the central authority for the Sikhs instead of the Emperor and Guru's orders were devotionally obeyed by the Sikhs. The revenue was channelised and regularized. As a result "by the end of the sixteenth century the Sikhs became to some extent a self-governing community, sustained by a well-planned organisational structure created by the Gurus, and a profitable system of collection of funds."[62]

This development was also marked by the other writers also like Mohsin Fani[63] and Trumpp. Guru Hargobind gave the Sikhs a concept of *Miri* and *Piri*. The author regards it a 'revolutionary

61 *Ibid.* p. 1.
62 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
63 'Dabestan-i-Mazahib' as quoted by Ganda Singh (ed.), *The Panjab Past and Present,* Punjabi University, Patiala, April, 1967. pp. 62-63.

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change' in Sikh psyche. Guru Hargobind created the nucleus of a body of self-sacrificing devotees which developed later into the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh. Thus, a psychology of resistance to the establishment order began to develop leading to a process of transformation of the Panth from an exclusive society of peace-loving and unobtrusive 'saints' to an expanding community of defenders of right and justice."[64] According to the author, The Sixth Guru was the precursor of the Tenth Guru; he laid the foundations for the imposing structure raised by Ranjit Singh. Guru Gobind Singh 'was the spiritual father of the state established by the Khalsa and raised to political pre-eminence by Ranjit Singh'.

As has already been said that the political history of the Sikhs begins with Banda Singh Bahadur. He was the founder of Sikh political power. The author writes that "Guru Gobind Singh, finding that his efforts to secure justice from the Mughal Government had failed, and realising that his own end was near, commissioned Banda (Singh) to accomplish by force what he had failed to accomplish by an appeal to justice." Therefore, after reaching in Punjab from Nanded, Banda Singh Bahadur 'lauched an armed struggle in the Punjab against the Mughal Government within a few months of Guru Gobind Singh's death' and this

64 A.C. Banerjee, *The Khalsa Raj*, pp. 31-32.

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struggle 'soon merged in a bid for acquisition of sovereignty'.[65] He aimed at complete liberation from Mughal rule. This necessitated the seizure of political power'. Thus 'Banda Singh was the first among the Sikhs to think of founding a political Raj.' in the large area 'extending from Karnal to Ludhiana'. In this state 'he assumed royal authority, but coins were struck in the name of the Guru. An official seal was introduced for authentication of state documents. The regional year was started from the date of conquest of Sirhind."[66] Thus, the author is true to the Sikh tradition and belief that 'Banda (Singh) made a definite and temporarily successful-bid for total sovereignty'. The author is also of the view that 'from a long-term point of view it is to be admitted that Banda initiated and led one of the most fruitful struggle in Indian history'.[67]

The struggle waged by Banda Singh Bahadur, though was crushed yet it 'brought out new leaders from the ranks of the peasantry'. These were the men whose origin was as undistinguished as that of Banda Singh himself. These men were orgnized in the Buddha Dal and Taruna Dal by Nawab Kapur Singh in 1733-34 and then by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia in the Dal Khalsa in 1748. In the view of the author "This was the beginning of a new phase in the history of the Sikhs." Because by this

65 *Ibid.* p. 32.
66 *Ibid.* p. 32.
67 *Ibid.* pp. 37.

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formation, 'the foundations of the territorial of the Sikhs were laid: the Dal Khalsa created a State'.

In 1747-48, Ahmad Shah Abdali began to attack India and the Punjab was the first province which faced these attacks. As a result , first the 'four mahals' Sialkot, Pasrur, Gujrat, Aurangabad and then Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan, Shikarpur and Multan were annexed by Abdali. This was the beginning of Afghan rule in the Punjab'.[68]

In 1756-57 'Ahmad Shah secured from the helpless Mughal Emperor the formal cession of the Punjab, Kashmir, the Sirhind province and Sindh and left these territories in charge of his son Taimur Shah who was appointed his viceroy in Lahore."[69]

Thus, 'the Sikh war of independence took a new turn.' The new turn was the change of the enemy. Because 'the Punjab was practically lost to the Mughal Empire', it became a part of the Afghan Empire. 'The Sikhs were henceforth concerned not so much with the Mughal Government as with Abdali's and his representatives and allies in India'.[70]

There was a long struggle between the Sikhs and the Abdali and the Sikhs came out victorious of this struggle. The author is of the view that the main cause of Abdali's failure was his military reputation. "He conquered, but did not consolidate. Instead of

68 *Ibid.* p. 41.
69 *Ibid.* p. 42.
70 *Ibid.* p. 41

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organizing an administrative machinery in the conquered territories he merely stationed military officers in important strategic posts."[71] Side by side the main cause of Sikh success was their 'religious fervour'. In the words of the author, "The religious fervour of the Sikhs belonged to an entirely different category. It inspired the Sikhs for a high constructive purpose." Ahmad shah is said to have remarked that it would be necessary for the complete reduction of Sikh power to wait until their religious fervour had evaporated. As yet the Sikh community as a body-politic was without an element of decay.[72] This purpose was to liberate their homeland from the oppressive joke of the foreigners. It projected into the entire community a sense of mission, a self-confidence and a readiness for sacrifice which were no mean assets in an armed struggle.

Describing the rising of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, his war and diplomacy, A.C. Banerjee writes that "Ranjit Singh played in the Punjab the role Akbar had played in North India and the Deccan. Just as the Mughal Empire was created by the annexation of numerous independent principalities to territories conquered by Humayun after his return from exile, so also the Kingdom was establishment as a result of the addition of the territories of the Trans-Sutlej Misls, as also Afghan territories in the North-west to

71 *Ibid.* pp. 45-46.
72 N.K. Sinha, *Rise of the Sikh Power,* Calcutta, 1960, p. 50.

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the small Sukerchakia principality established by Charat Singh and Mahan Singh."[73] Maharaja Ranjit Singh's progress during the years 1799-1805 was un-interrupted. By 1805 he had established his supermacy over the six trans-Sutlej Misls but by the treaty of Amritsar in 1809 his prospect of uniting the Sikhs under his rule was killed.

The treaty of Amritsar is a subject of controversy among the historians of the Punjab. Some say that it was the weakness of Ranjit Singh[74] but some say that it was the achievement of Ranjit Singh[75]. N.K. Sinha, a senior colleague of A.C. Banerjee and the professor in the same Department in which the author himself was the teacher, is the greatest critic of this treaty but A.C. Banerjee does not seem to support his senior colleague's view-point when he assesses the relations between Ranjit Singh and the Britishers. The learned author justifies the stand of Ranjit Singh in these words, "Statesmanship demands that rules should not jump recklessly to hopeless contests. Ranjit Singh is said to have remarked. I might perhaps derive the British as far as Allyghur but I should be driven back across the Sutlaj and out of my Kingdom. This was a realistic assessment of military

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73 A.C. Banerjee, *The Khalsa Raj,* New Delhi, 1985, p. 11

74 N.K. Sinha for example is of the opinion that "perhaps with the solicitude inherent in all builders he feared to expose the Kingdom he had created to the risks of war and chose instead the policy of yielding , yielding and yielding" Ranjit Singh calcutta, 1951, p. 91.

75 For example see Sita Ram Kohli, *Maharja Ranjit Singh,* (edited by Prithipal Singh Kapur), Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 2002, pp. 73-74.

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possibilities; it was hardly inspired by 'the dread' of the British power." C.H. payne is also of the opinion when he writes "until his death Ranjit Singh never lost sight of his kingdom depended on the maintenance of friendly relations with the British."[76] This should also be noted that the Britishers were in a stronger position in 1809 because the menace of French invasion was over and the modernized army of Ranjit Singh had not yet come into being. Therefore, they could impose more stringent terms on Ranjit Singh had they wanted to do so.

The author justifies the adoption of a monarchical form of government by Ranjit Singh because it 'was in consonance with political ideas developing among the Sikhs even before the establishment of their sovereignty.'[77] He is of the opinion that "The principle of monarchy had intruded into the Sikh political system at its infancy-in the days of Banda despite the democratic traditions of the *Panth*. Ranjit Singh Singh's political genius gave it an appropriate symbol."[78] As a matter of fact, Banda Singh Bahadur did not assume monarchical designation. His was the Republican government had it be classified into political theories.[79]

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76 C.H. Payne, *History of the Sikhs*, London, 1911, p. 135.
77 A.C. Banerjee, *The Khalsa Raj,* p. 112.
78 *Ibid.*, p. 118.
79 See also Ganda Singh, *Life of Banda Singh Bahadur*, Khalsa College Amritsar, 1935, p. 162. and Sukhdial Singh, *Khalsa Raj Da Bani Banda Singh Bahadur,* Punjabi Univeristy, Patiala, 2003, p. 53-55.

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Describing the military system of Ranjit Singh, the author concludes that 'the military system of Ranjit Singh 'in its ultimate shape may be termed a Frencho-British system in an Indian setting.' The division into brigades, the system of training, tactical formations, lay-out of the camps, marching order, barrack system, messing system, the system of Payment were modified according to the European ideas and practices.[80] The author further clarifies that "If the Khalsa troops failed to bring victories, and the machine broke down after his death, the responsibility lay not on his military system but on incompetent and treacherous leadership."[81] There is no doubt that Khalsa forces were defeated in the Anglo-Sikh wars due to its incompetent generals but not due to its warlike system.

General Sir Joseph Thack well who present at the battle also appreciated the Sikh bravery in these words, "It is due to the Sikhs to say that they fought bravely for though defeated and broken, they never ran, but fought with their *talwars* to the last and I witnessed several acts of great bravery in some of their sirdars and men."[82]

About the fall of the Khalsa Raj, the author is of the opinion that the Britishers were successful only due 'to their

80 A.C. Banerjee, *The Khalsa Raj,* p. 147.
81 *Ibid.* p. 149.
82 As quoted by Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs,* vol. II: 1839-2004, Oxford University, Press. 1999, p. 53.

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Machiavellian diplomacy and superiority in resources and leadership.' The author compares the British annexation of Punjab into their empire with Ranjit Singh's annexation of Kashmir and other trans-Indus regions into his kingdom. The author is of the opinion that these regions were not the homeland of the Sikhs. It is surprise that such a learned author does not know that Ranjit Singh were-occupying only those regions which were the part and parcel of Indian sub-continent. These regions were snatched away from India by the Afghan invaders like, Mahmud Gazni, Muhammad Ghori, Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali. There should not be the question of Sikh homeland. India was and is the homeland of the Sikhs and a Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh was recovering these regions.

V

A.C. Banerjee reproduced a book entitled *Anglo-Sikh Relations* in 1949. This is, in fact, a work of J.D. Cunningham. Cunningham wrote *A History of the Sikhs* in 1849. It is a classic work on the Sikhs. The book covers the whole period of the Sikhs from their origin to the first Anglo-Sikh war in 1845-46. Because Cunningham was thoroughly familiar with official correspondence relating to Anglo-Sikh relations and he also knew some of those officers who played a leading part in the first Anglo-Sikh war. Therefore, in the opinion of the editor A.C. Banerjee, the portion of

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his work which is related to Anglo-Sikh relations should be reproduced for the convenience of the public. The learned editor used the first edition or the original work of Cunningham. He cuts out those chapters of the book which are not related to the subject. In this way, the first four chapter of the book are left out. Because these chapters are related to the Gurus and the Sikh war of Independence in the eighteenth century and are inadequate and out of date; Thus, the first four chapters were left out and these chapters cover 99 pages of the book. But the editor keeps six pages of the fourth chapter. The total chapters are nine. With the six pages of the fourth chapter the last full-fledged five chapters are reproduced and to some extent are edited. Besides this, there are forty one Appendices in the book out of which only seventeen Appendices (from XXIII to XXXIX) are given. The rest of the Appendices are left out. Producing this material, the editor Clarifies that, "In reprinting those chapters for the convenience of the public I have not omitted or altered a single word occurring in the original, but I have omitted some portions which had no connection with the main theme i.e. Anglo-Sikh relations, and in some cases I have changed the present tense into the past tense. Some foot notes and portions of some foot notes have been omitted. Some foot notes those marked with an asterisk have been

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added."[83] Besides this, the editor also modernised the spellings of the proper names. The text of the given chapters has also been divided into convenient chapters and sections. In the end of the edited book, the Index is also given. The sixty-five page introduction is also given by the editor in the beginning.

In this introduction, the editor tried his best to justify Cunningham's assertion. The suzerainty of the East India company on the Sikh Kingdom was virtually established immediately after Ranjit Singh death. Cunningham refers to "Kharak Singh's own desire of resting upon the influence of the British power."[84] The causes of the first Anglo-Sikh war are described by Cunningham with an insight and judicial data cement which can hardly be improved upon. The treaties of March, 1846, virtually destroyed the independence of the Sikh State.[85]

By the treaty of Bhyrowal, the second treaty of Lahore (1846), the British Power in Lahore was fully consolidated.[86] After the consolidating of the British power, the British Resident cleared the every obstacles of the way to banish Maharani Juidan from Lahore. After the banishment of Maharani Juidan there was no such sardar in the court of Lahore who could have managed the

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83 A.C. Banerjee, *Anglo-Sikh Relations,* Calcutta, 1949 (preface) editors.
84 *Ibid* p, IXX (Introduction) .
85 *Ibid*, p. IXXI.
86 *Ibid.*, p. IXXV.

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defeated Monarchy and its over-lord, the East India Company. As a result, the circumstances were out of control and the British officials moulded the events according to their designes. The editor concludes that whether the Second Anglo-Sikh was provided a 'rightful opportunity' for the annexation of the Punjab is a question to which different answers may be given. There are writers who think that "It was a breach of trust", for Dalip Singh's territory was annexed by his guardian- The British Government.[87] It is interesting, but unprofitable, to enquire into legal and ethical aspects of Political questions, for human history has not yet arrived at a stage when political interests are subordinated to law or ethics.[88]

It is a good attempt of A.C. Banerjee to provide Cunningham's account of the Anglo-Sikh relations to the public. It is also a facility to the scholars of Sikh history. A scholar can feel incommodious to approach Cunningham's book but when he sees A.C. Banerjee's edited book he certainly feels convenient to go through the book. Therefore, the editor's effort to reproduce Cunningham's work to the readers is not useless.

As a matter of fact, the long introduction given by the editor is unsuitable to the subject. It covers 65 pages. It starts from the Bhagati movement in India, Thirty pages are covered with the

87 See also Evans Bell, *Annexation of the Punjab and The Maharaja Duleep Singh*, Trubner, London, 1882, p. 87.
88 A.C. Banerjee, *Anglo-Sikh Relations,* p. IXXXXIII.

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account of Bhagati movement. A summary of the Guru-period has also given. This is repetition because this account has been given in his previous books. This could be avoided without any damage to the utility of the work.

It can also be said safely about A.C Banerjee that as a historical thinker and writer, the approach of the learned author is characterised by logicality, balance of mind and intellectual honesty. He seldom indulged in surmises and generally left his facts to speak for themselves. He was not given to make any statement which was not warranted by reliable historical evidence. The subject of Anglo-Sikh relations is very controversial among the historians of Sikh history. A.C. Banerjee's approach and interpretation is certainly different from his mentor Indubhusan Banerjee and his senior colleague N.K. Sinha. They are more critical in describing Sikhism and Ranjit Singh but A.C. Banerjee is not critical in his approach. In fact, he applauded the Sikh achievements in history.

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CONCLUSION

Nationalist Historiography means that the historical writings produced or reproduced by the Indian historians highlight the Indian history from a national point of view. The national point of view represents the national culture and tradition. Every nation has its own culture and traditions and every nation wants to spread it. It can be possible through its literature. History is a part and parcel of literature, therefore, what history is written by a nation that represents its culture and traditions. That is called nationalist historiography. Our country, India remained subordinate for a very long time to the Islamic invaders and the Britishers since the eleventh century upto 1947. What the history was written of India during this period that is written purely from the alien point of view. That alien point of view represents India's weaknesses and social evils. Wherever there was the least similarity between Indian and foreign ideas, Indians were taken to be the borrowers. These deficiencies when identified by the Indian Scholars they began to replace these in their writings. Therefore, the task which the first generation of modern Indian historians had to perform was to define their culture and civilization against the alien attack. In this light it can be said that nationalist historians and nationalist historiography are the terms which are

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used in a comparative sense, in contrast to the colonial or imperialist attitude of alien writers, particularly the Britishers, in the writing of Indian history. The British historian had repeatedly asserted that India was not a country but a congries of small states and that the Indians were not a nation but a conglomeration of peoples of diverse creeds and sects. Therefore, the reaction of this approach was but natural. As the freedom struggle developed nationalist historiography attempted to re-interpret Indian history in order to infuse enthusiasm in the fight for freedom.

Resultantly, Historical study in India received its greatest inpetus from the sentiment of nationalism. Indians sought the key of their national development not in the immediate but in the remoter past. Inspired by this powerful motive for historical investigation the national spirit quickened the work of historical research. Armed with the newly acquired information, which it received from the sources that were in abundance in the form of movements, epigraphs, coins and other literary sources, Indian historians proceeded with the zeal of crusaders to refute the western charges against their nation and culture. The research of these Indian historians opened the vast vistas of their nation's ancient past and this new-found treasure in its turn filled their mind with national fervour and pride, enriched nationalism itself

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and quickened the struggle for freedom. But this fervour of nationalism in re-writing the Indian history "overshadowed long traditions of regional history and marginalized Sikhism" So, there was an urgent need to re-write the regional or Sikh history in a proper context. Romila Thapar observes that 'a valuable offshoot of nationalist historiography was a growth of interest in regional and local history. This in turn led to the discovery of new source materials in local repositories and to greater archeological work in the region. The result of such studies filled many lacune in historical knowledge and acted as a corrective to some of the earlier generlizations. Evidence of regional variations in the cultural pattern led to the recognition that it was unwise and unhistorical to generalize about the entire Indian sub-continent on the basis of the history of the Ganges heartland. In this light, the history of regional geographical areas of Indian sub -continent like the Punjab, Rajasthan and Maharashtra became the central point of the Indian historians. Consequently, the Sikh studies gradually broke fresh grounds in Bengal and steadily transcended the regional limits to attain a new height and respectability. The century-long search in Bengali for the Sikh history provided it with the necessary background. The Sikh past became an integral part of the professional teaching and critical research at the

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postgraduate level, stimulating publication of significant research works on Sikh history and religion in English.

The early decades to the twentieth century were dominated by an upsurge of religious nationalism. In Punjab, Gokul Chand Narang was powerfully influenced by this nationalism of the period. He was the first historian of Sikh history who wrote a regular history of the Sikhs in 1912. His work was *Transformation of Sikhism.* This book bears an indelible imprint of that nationalism. The basic approach of thought-pattern adopted by Gokal Chand Narang in writing this book needs to be seen in the light of this psyche. He belonged to the *Sehajdhari* Sikh family but he himself was an Arya Samajist. These two angles in his personality were contrast to each other and this contrast produced a kind of attitude which in some essential respects different from the typical attitude of Arya Samajist and Singh Sabhaites. Therefore, Sikhism to him was a movement in Punjab having as its chief aim raising the Hindus as a nation.

For Gokal Chand Narang, Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism seems to have thoroughly diagnosed the case of the Hindu Community of his time and found out that a religious revival was the only remedy which could save it from impending destruction. According to Gokal Chand Narang, the Hindus of Guru Nanak's times had lost almost all that lends dignity and

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grace to life and distinguishes religion from superstition and cant. Guru Nanak felt most unhappy at this state of affairs and at once made up his mind to devote his life to the service of his nation. By percept and by example he brought his people back to religion of simplicity and sincerity to wean them from the worship of stock and stone, restore to them pure worship of their ancient forefathers and made them once more able to stand their ground as a nation. During the times of Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs were entirely changed or transformed from a body of peaceful religious devotees to a national and political organization committed to strive for the good of the Hindus and having pugnacity and valour as its most important features. Gokal Chand Narang further adds that the object that Guru Gobind Singh set before himself was to infuse a new life into the dead bones of the Hindus, to make them forget their differences and present a united front against the tyranny and persecution. He had broken the charm of sanctity attached to the lord of Delhi and destroyed the awe and terror inspired by the Muslim tyranny. The Hindus had religion but not national feelings. The only to make a nation of them was to make nationalism their religion. The Guru had seen what was yet vital in them and he relumed them with a promethean fire.

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In this way, Gokul Chand Narang depicted the Sikh movement 'as the survival of Hinduism'. He regards the Sikhs as 'the advanceguard of Hinduism'. These Sikhs, according to Gokal Chand Narang, by virtue of their qualities led the way and drew the whole Hindu Punjab after them. The Sikhs are compared to the Aryans of the Vedic period. These views of Gokal Chand Narang though helped to increase the brotherhood between the Hindus and the Sikhs but these views also led him into the problem of how to characterize and adjust in his thought-pattern the emergence of the distinctive personality of the Sikh community. He is also well aware of the fact that the Sikh community created its independent institutions and traditions. But Gokal Chand Narang did not baffled and he solved the problem by saying that the development of organization was necessitated by the need to carry on the mission of Guru Nanak in an effective manner. In this way, adjusting the mixed views of an Arya Samajist and a faithful Sikh, Gokal Chand Narang continues to trace what he calls *Transformation of Sikhism* which has given the book its title. Judging from this point, *Transformation of Sikhism* appears to be the principal theme of the work but actually it is no independent theme but is just a part of the larger theme of Hindu national regeneration. So, according to the nationalist view of Gokul Chand Narang, the Sikh Gurus transformed the Hindus

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into the saint-soldiers and these saint-soldiers brought the glory to Indian nationalism.

The second historian who highlighted the Sikh history from the national point of view was Sita Ram Kohli. Though Sita Ram Kohli was not so pronounced in projecting Sikh history as a national struggle rather he is balanced and keenly aware of the historical forces that have been operating through the centuries to shape the community. But he too was not entirely free from the nationalist feelings. One thing should be remembered about Sita Ram Kohli that he was more of an editor than an original writer. Even as an editor he had to begin from a scratch and therefore, was faced from the very beginning, with the problem of dearth of authentic source books in editing the source books. He was always very careful and painstaking. His good linguistic equipment stood him in good stead in reading and comparing the texts of his manuscripts.

He was so facinated with the achievements of Maharaja Ranjit Singh that he devoted his life to collect and edit the sources which provided information on the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors. His contribution in this field is tremendous. His work on the *Khalsa Durbar Records* by itself is monumental. It is a measure of his great achievement that it stands where he left it and nobody since then has dared to

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resume it. His discovery and editing of some important new sources is also a valuable contribution.

After these two Punjabi historians-Gokul Chand Narang and Sita Ram Kohli- a modest beginning was made in the college Street Campus of the University of Calcutta in the first quarter of the twentieth century. At the request of the vice-chancellor of Calcutta University, Indubhusan Banerjee of the History Department took up teaching and research of Sikh history and religion. Therefore, the credit of providing a distinct shape to Sikh studies at the Calcutta University goes to Indubhusan Banerjee. In his *Megnum opus, Evolution of The Khalsa* in two volumes, he points that how the peaceful sect gradually turned into a 'military order' under the force of circumstances. Indubhusan Banerjee, however, had no doubt that the Khalsa underlined. 'a new ideology' and took note of various psychological and social-anthropological factors which had so long remained beyond the arena of regional Sikh studies.

In accordance with the motive and the environment in which the book was prepared, it was an excellent work an Sikh history. The first part of the book was published in 1936-37 and the second part in 1947. The study of Sikh history was started in Calcutta University in 1917. It was a non-Sikh environment-students and the teachers were non-Sikhs and Calcutta

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University too was non-Sikh Institution. In these circumstances, Indubhusan Banerjee's book was, in itself, an excellent work.

So far the correct interpretation of Sikh history, in accordance with the teachings of the Sikh Gurus, is concerned, Indubhusan Banerjee's statements and conclusions are unhistorical, illogical, self-condradictory and insensible to a large extent. This is especially so with the statements regarding Guru Nanak, Guru Hargobind Sahib, creation of the Khalsa and the Jat community. Though, some circumstantial facts are responsible for these statements. For example, Indubhusan Banerjee's lack of adequate knowledge about Punjabi Language and Punjabi Sources, his unduly heavy dependence on the English translations of Persian and Punjabi sources and Indubhusan Banerjee's being himself a Brahmin and therefore, the votary of Brahmanical tendencies etc.

In fact, Indubhusan Banerjee had tried to see the rise of Sikh Religion from the nationalistic perspective. Proceeding with the view point, Indubhusan Banerjee often disregard either the fundamental Principles of Sikh religion or misinterprets them. The teachings of Sikh religion in principle, are for the entire mankind and not for any one society or nation-state. However, by regarding Guru Nanak as a reformer of Hindu society, Indubhusan Banerjee goes for away from the fundamental truths of Sikhism. Keeping in

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view the circumstances of his time, Guru Hargobind Sahib adopted the armed policy for self defence but Indubhusan Banerjee interprets this policy as an attempt to give a certain place to the Jats in Sikh society. In such a way, Indubhusan Banerjee misinterprets the mission of Guru Hargobind. Indeed, the Jats are also an important part of Indian society but by ascribing to them as robbers, belligerents and the tendencies of disruptiveness running in their genes, Indubhusan Banerjee describes them as an uncivilized part of the society. Such statements clearly show Indubhusan Banerjee's Partisan attitude towards the Jat community of the Punjab. The purpose behind the creation of the Khalsa was to create a society based on equality and fraternity, putting an end to discriminations pertaining to caste, creed and colour. However, by describing the Khalsa as a mixture of a Sikh and a Jat, Indubhusan Banerjee negates the very foundation of the Khalsa.

Keeping in mind such statements and conclusions, it can be stated, without any hesitation that Indubhusan Banerjee's work amounts to a misinterpretation of Sikh history and it goes against the tenets of Sikh religion. Indubhusan Banerjee was not pioneer in writing Sikh history as A.C. Banerjee has written. Before Indubhusan Banerjee two Punjabi historians had written on Sikh history. One was Gokal Chand Narang and the second was

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Khazan Singh. Indubhusan Banerjee rejects the conclusions of Gokal Chand Narang but he was not aware of the writing of Khazan Singh because he mentioned him neither in the text and nor in the Bibliography.

Apart from all this, it would also be in the fitness of things to state that Indubhusan Banerjee was well-intentioned and did his work with earnestness and commitment. In fact, Indubhusan Banerjee's genuine commitment and good intentions manage to conceal all the inappropriate findings. It is for this reason that Indubhusan Banerjee's book *Evolution of The Khalsa* continues to be among the foremost accounts for Sikh scholars and students for the last sixty-seventy years. It has still not out dated as J.S. Grewal has opined. Even at present the book continues to be read as in the past and continues to be recommended for the Sikh history courses.

Indubhusan Banerjee covered the Guru period from 1469 to 1708. The period from 1716 to 1839 was covered by another Bengali historian N.K. Sinha. He also belonged to the same Department. *Ranjit Singh* (1933) and Rise of the *Sikh Power* (1936) and contemporary national sentiments were reflected in both of these works. He found the eighteenth century Sikh movement 'a nation up in arms against its enemies, struggling for independence'. He did not agree with J.N. Sarkar that these

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people were mere 'Plunderers' and 'brigands'. On the contrary, N.K. Sinha euphorically elevated the Sikhs to the status of a 'national militia' fighthing for the defence of their religion and liberty. He found Ranjit Singh 'a man of destiny' providing definite political shape to what had been envisioned by Guru Gobind Singh more than a century ago. Though, N.K. Sinha is critical of Ranjit Singh's policy towards the Britishers but he appreciates the achievements of Ranjit Singh in the trans-Sutlej and trans-Indus region.

Being a nationalist, N.K. Sinha admires, besides other equally redeeming qualities of the Sikh movement, two important aspects, namely, the Sikhs as a 'warrior nation' and the spirit of democracy of the Khalsa. He warns that the phrase 'theocratic confederate feudalism' should not be understood as it is understood in the West. The Sikh feudalism was entirely different from the medieval European Feudalism in spirit and form.

While making an assessment of the historical significance of the role of Ranjit Singh, Sinha says that 'in a small sphere' he was an unsuccessful Bismark and Lincoln in one'. Unlike Bismark who unified Germany by diplomacy and war, and unlike Lincoln who saved the USA from a major split by launching a war on the South, Ranjit Singh could not unite the Punjab or whole of the Sikh community could not be brought within his own Kingdom.

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N.K. Sinha's assessment of Ranjit Singh as a popular military monarch, radiating the aspirations of the people of the Punjab and symbolizing a tradition of freedom and strength is in the spirit to a reaction of the British writers. Therefore, the ideas and approach of N.K. Sinha do not differ from those of many Hindu nationalist historians. N.K. Sinha is a nationalist, for he extends his unqualified approval of acts of those who fought against the Britishers. Besides this, he is a Hindu nationalise too, the regards the Mughals and other Muslim rulers as foreigners. His vision and conceptual understanding of history is typically similar to that of a Hindu nationalist of nineteen thirties, for the analyses and explains the history of the eighteenth and early nineteen century with personal priorities fixed by him. Like Gokul Chand Narang and Indubhusan Banerjee, N.K. Sinha nowhere in his writings, did equate the Sikhs with the Hindus.

The tradition to work on Sikh history continued after Indubhusan Banerjee and N.K. Sinha. In the post-independence years, the new scholarship steadily entered into the wider demarcated as national and mainstream. Their writings generally fitted in well with the dominant tradition of Sikh studies. The appreciation of the traditional Sikh point of view brought the scholars of Calcutta University closer to the Sikh world in the post-independence decades. Anil Chandra Banerjee, popularly

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called as A.C. Banerjee, was the senior most scholar during their period who re-wrote the Sikh history and re-interpreted it according to the Sikh traditions. His approach and interpretation is different from both Indubhusan Banerjee and N.K. Sinha. He gives accounts of the Sikhs from the birth of Guru Nanak to the annexation of the Khalsa Raj into the British India in 1849. His scholarly studies imparted dignity to the Guru Nanak Chair, which he held for a couple of years in the nineteen seventies.

A.C. Banerjee sees the Sikh movement as the liberating force, which liberated the human beings first from the shackles of religious bigotry and then from the political slavery. In fact, A.C. Banerjee got the inspiration from the lectures of Surendra Nath Banerjee, a dismissed officer of Indian civil Service, who studied Sikhism and delivered his historical lectures on Sikh history on the platform of Calcutta Student's Association founded by Anand Mohan Bose. He delivered his lectures in 1878. This was the pre-congress period and in this period, the Bengali intellectuals were seeing Sikhism as the great force for national unity. The lectures of Surendra Nath Banerjee have no doubt that he was aware of the religious, social and political implications, of Guru Nanak's mission. Sikhism presented really a movement of freedom, first against the current ceremonialism and Brahuminical domination of the Hindu community. In its political aspect, it was really a

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movement of freedom against the Mughals, Afghans and against the British aggression. It is in this light that A.C. Banerjee regards Guru Nanak not only the greatest son of the Punjab but also one of the greatest sons of India. 'He laid the foundations of a brotherhood which has enriched our national heritage by struggle against religious intolerance, social injustice and denial of political freedom. History must pay its homage to one who-in serving God-Served his country so well.

The works of all these historians show a clear impact of the modern historical methodology which is obviously the gift of the west to India. No doubt, the methodology of these nationalist historians is from outside but their point of view is pure Indian. The strong wave of Indian nationalism was sweeping the country at the time of their writing. Only A.C. Banerjee belonged to the post-independence period but he also followed the footsteps of his ancestors. Gokal Chand Narang is the most pronounced in projecting Sikh history as a national struggle. Indubhusan Banerjee and N.K. Sinha are more balanced and also more keenly aware of the historical forces which have been operating through the centuries to shape the destiny of the community. Sita Ram Kohli is more Punjabi. His view point shows that Punjabi heroism and valour.

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As a result of the efforts of all these nationalist historians, the Sikh history achieved an honourable place in Indian history. The achievements of the Sikh movement were regarded as the best Sikh contribution to the Indian nation. The North-West region from Indus to the Jamuna river, were snatched away from India by the Afghan invaders. It is also said that Afghanistan was also at one time a part of India but India lost it once for all. India would also have lost the North-Western Frounter region, the Punjab and Kashmire but for the rise of the Sikhs and the consolidation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's sway in these regions. It was a certainty that if Ranjit Singh did not establish his Kindgom, at least the North Western Frontier region and Kashmir would have become a part of Afghanistan under the Barkzais. Maharaja Ranjit Singh as Indian chieftain secured the support of all sections of his people. He defended the North-Western region against the powerful Afghans and its unruly tribes and administered it successfully. He trained an army whose fighting qualities came as a revelation to his opponents. That is why, Maharaja Ranjit Singh has achieved the prominent place among the great rulers of India. Today, he is regarded as the last sovereign of India before the British rule. The Sikhs are regarded as warrior community of India. Punjab is regarded as the sword arm of India.

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GLOSSARY

adalti	:	A Judicial Officer
adi Granth	:	The Sikh Scripture; the full name is *Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji*
ahadnama	:	Agreement
akali	:	A member of the Akali or Nihang order of the Sikhs Literally meaning 'an immortal
akhbar	:	News, News paper
akhbar-i-darbar-i-mualla	:	The Royal Mughal Court News
amir	:	A Nobel, a ruler.
amir-ul-umra	:	A Nobel of nobles, a noble of high order.
amrit	:	The Sikh boptism of the double edged sword
ardas	:	A prayer
ashrafi	:	A gold coin
avtar	:	A prophet
azan	:	A Muslim call for prayer.
akal-purakh	:	The one beyond time, The God.
akal takhat	:	The supreme authority seat of the Sikhs, situated at Amritsar in front of Sri Darbar Sahib
Takhat	:	Authority seat, there are five Takhats of the Sikhs situated in the different regions of India. These are: Sri Akal Takhat Sahib at Amritsar, Takhat Sri Keshgarh Sahib at Anandpur Sahib, Takhat Sri Damdama Sahib at Talwandi Sabo (Bathinda), Takhat Sri Patna Sahib (Bihar) and Takhat Sri Hazur Sahib Nanded (Mahharashtra)
amritdhari	:	An initiated member of the Khalsa Common-wealth or a Sikh who has been baptized

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amrit sanskar	:	The initiation (baptization) ceremony of the Khalsa.
babaji	:	An elderly and respected person
bahadur	:	Brave, also a title of distinction
baisakhi	:	The first day of the month of Baisakh, an important festival of rural Punjab, celebrating the advent of harvesting season, generally falling into the second week of April
banjara	:	A businessman, an itinerant trader
baoli	:	A well with stairs going down to the water.
bet	:	An area situated on the bank of a river
bhagat	:	Devotee of the God, a contributor to the Adi Granth other then the Guru
bhagtia	:	A dancing boy.
bhai	:	Literally a brother and a title of sanctity and respectability among the Sikhs
bhangi	:	Addicted to taking bhang or hemp-an intoxicant, also the name of a Sikh Misal in 18th Century.
bigha	:	An old measure of land equal to 4 Kanals (equal to one thousand square yards) and in certain areas equal to 2 Kanals. Its size varies from region to region.
bir	:	Pasture, Jungle, forest
budha dal	:	An army of the Sikh veterans or the army of the Sikh elders
bungah	:	A dwelling place or a store house attached to a Sikh temple
budki	:	Gold ducats
beldar	:	A class of workmen employed in digging
bazaz	:	A cloth merchant

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baradari	:	Brotherhood
baran-dari	:	An open hall, a summer house with twelve doors.
chadar	:	A sheet of cloth used to cover the body or the bed
chadar pauna	:	A ceremony to marry a widow
chak	:	A Village
chauth	:	It was a payment which saved a place from the unwelcome presence of the Maratha soldiers and civil underlings under Shivaji
charpai	:	A cot
chaudhari	:	A chief person of the village, usually rich and distinguished.
chhota ghallughara	:	A small holocaust occurred in 1746
chugan	:	A sort of Polo game
chobdar	:	A mace-bearer
chaprasi	:	a messenger, or other servent, so-called from his wearing a chapras (a sort of buckle or breast-plate), Peon.
chief Khalsa Diwan	:	A united cultural body of the Sikhs to conduct the affairs of the Amritsar and Lahore Singh Sabhas jointly
daftar	:	A register or a book, also an office
dal	:	A group of persons, a Sikh contingent
dal-Khalsa	:	The national army of the Sikhs during 18th Century under the leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia
dargah	:	A mausoleum
dastar	:	A turban
deohri	:	An entrance to a house or building
derah/ dera	:	An abode, a camp

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dharamsala	:	A place of congregation.
dharam-yudh	:	A holy war
diwali	:	The Indian festival of Lights celebrated in commemoration of the return of Lord Rama from his exile and the release of Guru Hargobind from the fort of Gwalior, usually falling towards the end of October or in the beginning of November.
diwan	:	The head of the finance department, a finance officer
diwan-khana	:	An audience hall.
doab/doaba	:	A territory lying between two rivers, and in the Punjab particularly the one between the rivers, Satluj and Beas.
doshala	:	A double Shawl
durbar	:	A court, an audience hall, government.
daftri	:	One in charge of office records
dupatta	:	A piece of Linen in which there are two breadths
darshan	:	Appearance of an eminent person, audience, sacred object
degh tegh fateh	:	couldron, sword, victory', a permanent slogan of the Khalsa
dhadhi	:	Village bard
faqir	:	A mendicant, a religious minded person devoted to meditation
farman	:	A royal order
farzand-i-dilband	:	An enchanting or charming son, a little conferred by the British government on Raja Randhir Singh of Kapurthala Stata
faujdar	:	Literally an official who maintained troops

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for law and order, the administrator of a *Sarkar* under the Mughals, a commander

farrash : A servant whose business is to spread the carpets.

farangi : Foreigners, Englishmen, Britishers

five 'ks' : Five items of an Amritdhari Khalsa which initiate with 'k' letter of *Gurmukhi* script These are: *Kesh* (hair), *Kangha* (comb), Karha (Steel wrist ring), Kachhehra (breeches which must not extend below the knees. and *Kirpan* (Sword long or short). These five items are necessary to wear by the Khalsa.

gaddi : An elevated place for the Guru or a ruler to sit on, throne, cushion, a seat of authority

garhi : A fortress

gharana : A house, a family

ghee : purified butter

giani/gyani : A learned man of Punjabi Language.

granth sahib : Literally a book but here used for Holy book of the Sikhs *Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib*

granthi : The reader or the reciter of the *Guru Granth Sahib* of the Sikhs

groh-i-singhan : A group of contingent of the Sikhs, here used for the Dal Khalsa

gur : Molasses

gurdwara : A Sikh Place of congregtion with the presence of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*

gurmata : A resolution passed in an assembly of the *Sarbat Khalsa* in the presence of the holy *Guru Granth Sahib*

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guru	:	A guide, preceptor, title of the founders of Sikh religion, the Sikhs having a hierarchy of ten Gurus
guru-gaddi	:	A seat of Guru's spiritual authority
guru-ghar	:	A Sikh place of congregation
golandaz	:	A gunner
ghari	:	A measure of time equal to twenty-five minutes
ghat	:	ferry
garibi	:	poverty
got or gotra	:	sub-caste
gujar	:	a milk seller
gurbani	:	Compositions of the Gurus included in *Guru Granth Sahib*
gurmat	:	The teachings of the Gurus
gurmukhi	:	Script of the Punjabi language invented by the Gurus and used by the Gurmukhs.
gian	:	Knowledge
guru-panth	:	The Panth (baptized Khalsa) in its role as Guru.
harem	:	Mohammadan women's dwelling house, female quarters, specially in the royal places
haarhi (rabi)	:	Summer harvest
Harimandir	:	The temple of God, the Golden Temple of Amritsar.
haveli	:	A mansion, an elegant house of a chief.
hazari	:	Holder of a rank of one thousand
hola	:	Annual spring festival of colours
howdah	:	A seat on an elephant's back
hukam	:	The royal order, the warrant, an injunction
hukamnama	:	Letter of command, document containing a

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		command or a request issued by the Gurus, an order issued by Akal Takhat.
haumai	:	Self -centredness
halal	:	Flesh of an animal killed in accordance with Muslim rituals.
id	:	A Muslim festival
id-ul-zuha	:	A Muslim festival which falls on the 16th day of last month of Islamic Calendar. It is a thanks giving celebration and animals are sacrificed on the occasion
ilaka	:	A territory, an estate, jurisdiction.
imam	:	A Muslim preacher who leads prayer in the mosque
izzat	:	prestige, honour, self-respect
jagir	:	An assignment of land or land revenue or a fixed sum of money for services rendered or to be rendered, an estate.
jagirdar	:	The holder of a *Jagir*
jama	:	A gown
jarmana jurmana	:	Fine, penalty
jatha	:	A group of baptized Sikhs
jathedar	:	Leader of the group of baptized Sikhs
jawan	:	A youngman, a soldier
jhiwar	:	A person belonging to a class of water carriers, a water-man
jazailchi	:	a musketeer
jarrah	:	a surgeon
janamsakhi	:	life-stories of Guru Nanak written in a very simplistic and in a dramatic way.
jatt/jaat	:	A section of Indian society which dominates the rural areas in the Northern India. These

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people are mostly agriculturists.

jhatka : flesh of an animal killed with a single blow. It is a Khalsa way of killing the animal

julaha : Weaver

kacchehra : Half trousers of Khalsa style.

kalghi : A small aigrette plume.

kambli : Blanket,

kankut : A method of assessment based on the appraisal of the standing crops.

karah parshad : Sacred pudding distributed in the Gurdwaras

kardar : An officer incharge of the revenue and local administration of a *Pargana or* taluqa

katra : a section of a bazar

khalsa-land : The Land held or administered directly by the sovereign

khillat : A robe of honour

kos : An old measure of roads, distance of about four kilometres.

kot : surrounding wall of a city or a complex or a house.

kotwal : A police officer in charge of a *Kotwali,* a *thana* or a police station.

kuran : The sacred book of the Muslims

kumedan : A unior officer in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

khes : A kind of cloth, a sheet or wrapper

kangn : A bracelet

kantha : A neckless

kanat : Wall of a tent, a screen.

kachhehri : A court of Justice

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kalal	:	Distiller. Those Kalals who have adopted Sikhism are called Ahluwalias
kanphat yogi	:	Split-ear yogi, follower of Gorakhath and adherent of the Nath tradition
kismat	:	The destiny, the fate of an individual
kesahdhai	:	A Sikh who retains the Kesh (uncut hair)
khalsa	:	A religious order established by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. A baptized Sikh.
khande di pahul	:	Amrit prepared by the two edged sword
khangah	:	A Muslim religious establishment
khatri	:	A mercantile caste of Punjab
kirtan	:	Musical singing of hymns of Guru Granth Sahib
kuka	:	Member of the Namdhari sect of the Sikhs.
kurehit	:	One of the four cardinal infringements of the rehat in Sikhism.
kuttha	:	Meat from an animal killed in a Muslim way.
langar	:	Common and free Kithen attached to every Gurdwara from which food is served to all regardless of caste or creed.
lohri	:	A winter festival of India which falls on the night between the last day of *Poh* and the first day of *Maagh.*
lota	:	a pot
lohar	:	Blacksmith caste
mahabat	:	An elephant driver
mahant	:	A Priest of a Dera
maharaja	:	The great King, the King of Kings, a ruler and a sovereign ruler
mata	:	An elderly lady
majha	:	Literally the middle land of the two rivers,

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		usually referring to the territory between Ravi and Bieas rivers of the Punjab.
malwa	:	Land of the Malwaies or Malois usually referring to the territory between the Satluj and Ghaggar rivers.
manji	:	Literally a cot. A Sikh preaching-centre established by Guru Amar Das.
masand	:	Gurus agent who preached Sikhism
matta	:	A resolution
maund	:	An old unit of weight of 40 seers.
mir	:	An army leader or a general
misal	:	A unit of Dal Khalsa which was organized on the Baiskhi day, 1748.
misaldar	:	Chief of a Misal
mohri	:	A trunk of wood
morcha	:	An agitation against the government
mufti	:	Pronouncer of fatwa or verdict according to Muslim law
mukhtiar	:	An agent, an accredited representative
mulla	:	A Muslim teacher who imparts Islamic teachings
munshi	:	A Scribe, a writer
muqadam	:	A village headman
mutsaddi	:	An accountant, a clerk.
mullan	:	A Muhammadan priest
mazhabi/chuhra	:	A low caste Sikh
mehrab	:	The niche in a mosque which indicates the direction of the *Kabah* in Mecca.
miri-piri	:	Doctrine that Guru Hargobind Sahib (The Sixth Guru of the Sikhs) instituted. *Miri* means temporal power and *Piri* means the

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spiritual authority

mlechh : barbarian, the term used by Punjabi's for the Muslims who came as invadors.

murshid : The head of a Muslim religious order

nakhas : A horse market

nawab : A title of high authority

nazar : An offering to a superior or a holy person

nazarana : A tribute from a tributary or a dependant on a regular basis or an special occasions.

nazim : The governor of a province

neonda : A collection of gifts in cash at the time of marriage

nishan sahib : A pole carrying Sikh emblem (flag)

nit-name : The Sikh daily liturgy

nizamat : Local government

nazim : The term denotes an officer employed in a Judicial court

nagarchi : One who beats a kettle-drum

nanakshahi : Standard currency of the Sikh Government

nai : Barber by caste

naam : The divine name, a summary term expressing the total being of *Akal-Purakh*

namaaz : Muslim Prayer

namdhari : A member of Kuka sect

naam-japana : Devoutly repeating the divine Name

naam-simran : The same as naan-japana. The devotional practice of meditating on the divine name or *naam*

nanak-panthi : The followers of Guru Nanak, the early Sikh community.

nath-traditions : The belief of Gorakh Nath.

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nirankar	:	The formless being, the God of Sikh concept.
nirmala	:	A Sikh sect started from the times of Guru Gobind Singh.
pagri	:	A turban
pahul	:	Sikh *amrit* or initiation
palki	:	A palanquin
panch	:	A representative of the people, a member of the village Panchayat.
panchayat	:	A village court of arbitration consisting of five or more members. It was the lowest rung in the hierarchy of Indian administration.
pangat	:	A row in a Sikh Langar without any consideration of a caste or creed.
panj piaras	:	Five beloved ones created by Guru Gobind Singh.
panth	:	The baptized Sikh community.
pargana	:	A unit of Mughal administration equal to the present district (roughly).
patan	:	A crossing place in the river.
patka/keshki	:	Head covered by a small piece of turban.
pir	:	A spiritual guide among the Muslims.
pirhi	:	Literally a sort of comfortable stool for the preacher to sit on.
pothi	:	A small book, particularly containing scriptures.
pranayam	:	A practice of stopping breath.
pucci garhi	:	A fortress built with stones and bricks
pujari	:	A priest, a worshipper
purbiya	:	A term applied to the residents of Hindustan proper. At present it represents the Bihari migrants.

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patwari	:	A revenue official in a village who keeps the account of the land and its revenue
peshkar	:	A chief clerk or a chief *Munshi*
parwana	:	A written order or requisition
pao or paia	:	One fourth of *Ser (Kilogram).*
pajama	:	Trousers
pahredar	:	Watchmen or guards
pehar	:	A division of time being the forth part of the natural day and night. A day is divided into two *Pehars* i.e., forenoon or after-noon.
dopehar	:	Noon
prampra	:	Tradition. The account which has been written on the basis of oral tradition.
paatth	:	A lesson, a reading of Sikh scripture
patit	:	A Sikh who commits one of the four cardinal (Kurehat) sins. A defaulter Sikh.
pauri	:	Stanza of a *Vaar*
puratan	:	A written account belonging to an older times. The *Puratan Janamsakhi*.
qanungo	:	A keeper of the revenue records at the *Pargana* or *Taaluqa* level
qaum	:	A community
qazi	:	A judge, an official appointed by the government to administer civil and criminal justice.
qila	:	A fort
qiladar	:	Incharge of the fort
rehat	:	A code of conduct
raj	:	A kingdom, a government
raja	:	A ruler, a prince, a title of high rank in the Kings court.

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raja-i-rajgan	:	A little of a senior-most wazir in King's court
rakhi	:	Protection, an amount realised in return for protection
rani	:	Queen, a ruler's wife
rukhsat	:	Leave
razinama	:	Lit., an agreement, a note of good will
rehatnama	:	A manual of Rehat
raj karega khalsa	:	The Khalsa shall rule.
ravidasia/chamar	:	A Sikh belonging to the caste of leather dressers.
ramgaria/tarkahan	:	A Sikh belonging to the caste of carpenters
sacha padshah	:	A true or spiritual king, usually used by the Sikhs for their Gurus
sadhu	:	An ascetic
saif	:	A sword
samadh	:	A mausoleum
sanad	:	An official document or a certificate.
sangat	:	Congregation, a holy assembly of the Sikhs
sarbat khalsa	:	A representative assembly of all sections of Sikh community.
sardar	:	A leader, a chief, a commander, A form of address for the Sikhs
sarkar	:	An administrative unit bigger than a pargana, roughly like a present day district.
sarkar-i-wala	:	A ruler, a title of distinction.
sarovar	:	A tank
sati	:	A wife who burns herself on the funeral pyre of her dead husband, self immolation.
sawar	:	A horseman, a military rank, a cavalier, a trooper
serai	:	An inn.

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sewa	:	Service free of any remuneration or wages
shahid	:	A martyr
shahi samadhan	:	Royal mausoleums
shahidi jatha	:	A group prepared to undergo any sacrifices
shahukar	:	A banker, a money lender
shukrana	:	A present of thanks-giving.
Sikh	:	A follower of Sikhism.
suba	:	A province, a division of a kingdom or an Empire.
subedar	:	The governor of a province
sukhmani	:	Psalm of Peace, a *Bani* of Guru Arjan Dev Ji
sultan-ul-qaum	:	*Badshah,* a king
shivala	:	A Hindu temple
sawari	:	A term of respect used for a high officials riding a hourse, elephant or some other suitable conveyance.
sarwarna	:	An offering intended to be given away as alms for the good of some one.
sarishtadar	:	A clerk in immediate personal attendance of an officer (generally a judicial officer).
salam	:	A mode of salutation
sadh	:	A Hindu saint
shabad	:	A hymn of *Adi Granth*
sabha	:	Society, Association.
sehajdhari	:	A Sikh who adopts Sikhism in a slow process. A slow-adopter of Sikhism.
sant	:	A pious person. One who Knows the truth.
sant-sipahai	:	A Saint-Soldier. An ideal Sikh who combines a qualities of a sanit and a soldier in himself.
shariat	:	Muslim religious law.
silsilah	:	A Sufi lineage of islam

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singh sabha	:	A Sikh Reform Movement started in 1873.
salok	:	A stanza of Adi Granth
sufi	:	A member of one of the Muslim mystical orders.
taaluqa	:	A revenue administrative unit.
tabedar	:	A follower completely subservient to his chief.
tarikh/twarikh	:	History
taruna dal	:	A contingent or an army of the young Sikhs
tehsildar	:	An officer in charge of a *Tehsil* (a unit of revenue administration)
thana	:	A police station
thanedar	:	An officer in charge of a *thana*
theh	:	A deserted place.
tila	:	A hillock, a dune
top	:	gun
toshekhana	:	A store room, a ward robe, a chamber in which objects of value or rare articles are kept
takhat	:	Authority seat, There are five Takhats of the Khalsa commonwealth.
taksal	:	mint, a sect of the Sikhs named Damdami Taksal.
talib	:	a seeker
tankhah	:	A penance for a violation of the Khalsa rehat
tankhahia	:	a transgressor against the rehat
tarkhan	:	A caste of carpenters also called *Thoka* and Ramgarhia
tat khalsa	:	That group of the Khalsa who betrayed Banda Singh Bahadur and Joined the Mughal government in the early decades of

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		eighteenth century.
tazkira	:	Collections of biographical anecdotes.
udasi	:	Missionary journey a Sikh sect founded by Baba Sri Chand
uprajparmukh	:	Deputy Governor of PEPSU
vakil	:	An ambassador, an agent or a representative.
vaheguru	:	praise to the Guru, a sikh name of God
vaar	:	A poetic form
varna	:	The Hindu caste hierarchy or a division of society.
wada ghallughara	:	A big holocaust of the Sikhs which occurred in 1762
wazir	:	A counsellor of a state, a minister.
wilayati	:	The term is applied to those who are of the foreign country; in the book it denotes the merchants from central Asia.
yama	:	An angel of death
yogi	:	An ascetic
yudh	:	A war.
zamburk	:	A camel battery
zamindar	:	A landlord, proprietor or an occupant of land
zamzama	:	Name of a gun
zanana	:	A harem, female quarter specially in the royal palaces
zambura	:	A small gun, a swivel
ziyaft	:	Entertainment.

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